

TEEVADHARA

A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

CHRIST AND CREATIVITY

JESUS HAD IMAGINATION

Samuel Rayan

CHRIST(OLOGY) AS CREATIVE MYSTERY

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CHRISTOLOGY AND THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF MANKIND

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THE CHRISTIAN AND CREATIVITY

M. Amaladoss

BULLETIN 1: THE DUTCH CATECHISM

H. Gielen

BULLETIN 2: ART INDIA

Mathew Lederle

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JEEVADHARA

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The Living Christ

CHRIST AND CREATIVITY

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Editorial

In giving Jesus to us and in raising him from the dead, God has in principle fulfilled the promise He had made centuries earlier to create a new heaven and a new earth. Jesus is the New Creation, and no man can relate to him in faith in whatever measure or manner without experiencing him as an urge to newness of life, to newness in thinking, acting and relating to one's fellowmen. Jesus has become for us an invitation and inspiration to creativity. For when we confess that God raised Jesus from the tomb, and made this man the Lord and Saviour of the world, and that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, we are also affirming, among other things, that man is far greater in capacity and destiny than he is usually thought to be. We are starting or continuing a process of discovering the inexhaustible potentialities of man and the endless openness of the finite to the Infinite. By our faith we proclaim that man and his world can be different, and greater and better than they are now or have been at any point of time. The measure of the difference and the greatness is the risen Jesus and his divine Sonship. To believe and be a Christian is to accept this new Image of Man and the responsibility for realizing it. This is the background of the essays – for that is what they are – in this number of *Jeevadharma*.

They exhibit no astounding originality, but together they point in a direction in which thought and life in the Indian Churches should move. Such a converging testimony is important when the Churches are still uneasy about movement and change and about the second Vatican's confession that "today we have passed from a static view of things (including the Church, I suppose) to one that is dynamic and evolutionary."

The creative urge that Jesus brings has to become operative in all spheres of life, and first of all in our understanding of Jesus himself. This is what the first three contributions are concerned with. In *Jesus Had Imagination*, Samuel Rayan looks at some of the concrete New Testament data in which the Lord

is presented as creative love in the midst of human history. With rare originality and shocking unconventionality, Jesus shapes for men a new style of life and new patterns of religious thought, moral behaviour and worship of God. He constantly breaks through the settled and the sealed, the tradition and the tomb. But the way his life came to an end shows that creative thinking and living has often to be dearly paid for. Xavier Irudayaraj carries the study forward by reviewing the Christology of the fourth gospel as a creative mystery. He points to Christ as constituted by God's creative activity, creative Word, Self-Communication and Presence as well as by Jesus' creative response, consisting of his fidelity to God and his passion, the birth-pangs of the Messiah bringing forth the New World. Thus constituted, Jesus becomes for us God's creative initiative, calling forth from within us the response of faith. Where the two meet, Christian creativity has its source. The horizons are pushed to the farthest limits and finally broken through in Sebastian Painadath's article, *Christology and the Spiritual Heritage of Mankind*. He explores the deep and broad foundations of movement and creativity in Christology itself. Christology starts from the experience of what is immanent in history and proceeds to the mystery of the Word and the Spirit who transcend history. It begins with the Word as experienced in the limited and the particular in Jesus, in the Church and in the Christian Scriptures, but it does not stop there; for it is in a transcendent way that the Word is present in them. It therefore proceeds to the total spiritual heritage of mankind, and opens to the past and to the future, opens to diversity and pluralism, to numberless creative possibilities, and ultimately loses itself in the unspeakable mystery of the Word. Christology consists in this continued and relentless search for the universal Christ by the Church and the world which, in their turn, have been found by him.

The next two articles try to see how the perspective described so far may be realized in particular areas of human experience. Irudayaraj again enters a zone of Hindu spiritual heritage, and searches for the Christological dimensions of the Guru tradition. He is able to point to a new understanding of the creative role of Christ in our life. As Guru Christ creates for us the possibility of sharing in the Sonship, the knowledge and

the love which are the Father's special gifts to him. M. Amaldoss turns to the sphere of artistic creativity, and shows how there is a touch of the artistic and the creative in the Christian experience of faith and worship itself. Without it religion would degenerate into conformity, magic and activism. The spirit's creative *élan* provides the contemplative vision we require to recognize the world and human history as symbols and signs of God's self-revelation which reaches its culmination in his personal image, Jesus Christ, whose truth and beauty the liturgy seeks to reflect and communicate.

To these two correspond the two bulletins at the end. H. Gielen tells the story of the New Catechism, the Christian Faith for Adults, which the Dutch hierarchy gave to their Church. This work has been one of the significant creative achievements of the Church in this century. An up-to-date presentation of the Faith for adults is no easy matter. It is only the active and dynamic faith of a Church that can evolve new forms in which the substance of the Christian confession is offered with fidelity and as a challenge. It is a creative act of Christ the Guru, in and through a Church. The story of the discussion around this work is as great a stimulus to reflection as is its content. It is one more instance of the fact that from the days of Jesus every creative process in religion has been marked by conflict. Finally, to Amaldoss' thoughts on Christianity and Creativity corresponds the report by Mathew Lederle of his experiences as the publisher of *Art India*. *Art India* has been one of the few creative steps the Church in India has taken, quietly and firmly, in order to make Christian existence more and more incarnate and articulate in this country and, on the other hand, to enable her to become an intelligible and effective party in a dialogue with the rest of India. The report and the names of the artists it lists are also a challenge to the older churches in the land as far as creativity is concerned.

Aarhus,
Denmark

Samuel Rayan

Jesus Had Imagination

Paul's famous poem on love has a freshness and fascination which never fade. Men still read with joy the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians I, and succumb to its power and charm. "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous, or conceited, or proud;... love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up: it bears and believes and hopes all things. Love is without end."

Love is imaginative

We could perhaps seek Paul's permission to add a footnote: "Love is imaginative and inventive. It keeps thinking up things for the beloved. It awakens the imagination to creativity. Love sees visions, and its dreams are endless. Ever on the search for a larger and richer life for the beloved, it continually discovers new possibilities beyond the given and the conventional. Love will not let things stagnate and freeze, but strives to quicken them to warm movement and growth. Therefore it is kind but also impatient. "It bears all things", and when it breaks a few it does so in order to release their hidden promise and to liberate the future that is held captive within them.

Jesus' love was no exception to this. Because he loved he turned a great deal of water into wine and made abundant provision for a wedding party to make merry, instead of preaching to them mortification and abstinence. Because he loved he cleared the temple of an accepted and authorised misuse. He made a whip from cords and drove out all the animals, and overturned the tables of money-changers and scattered their coins¹. All the days he moved among us, his love was alive with imagination. It kept him on the look-out for opportunities to enhance our life and enlarge our freedom. Because he loved, Jesus could not be a determinist or a materialist, tied down to the given, and incapable of thinking differently from what is,

1. Jn ch 2

as if the traditional and the accepted had exhausted life's possibilities. In the freedom of his love he could see new depths and meanings in things, could conceive new patterns of human relationships, and envision fresh dimensions for religion. He so loved the world that his imagination sprang surprises on it, and thereby created for it and for his Church an incessant call to imaginative living. It is important for us, his Church, to reflect on this aspect of the Lord's Person and Work in order to test and renew our own life and love. For it may well be that inventiveness is the hall-mark of an authentic and living Church.

Men of imagination

Jesus was enthusiastic about men who could act or react imaginatively. He knew he himself belonged with them. Once it occurred to him that it would be fun to walk on the lake of Galilee instead of always crossing it by boat. He therefore did it. And he was delighted to see one of his disciples child enough to be inspired by his example and to desire to imitate him. Peter also wanted to walk on the water, and Jesus said, "Come!"². Then there was the rich man Zachaeus who showed himself capable of the unconventional act of climbing a tree in order to see Jesus, for, being short, he was prevented by the crowd from getting sight of him. Jesus answered him with equal unconventionality and went and stayed with him as his guest. And he found the man open to further disclosures of his dream of the New Society in which men mutually respected one another and shared the fruit of their work³. A third case is that of the blind man, Bartimaeus, who sought from Jesus not the usual penny or even a pound, but something really big. He wanted sight, and Jesus gave it to him at once⁴. There is also the example of the woman who, to express her love and esteem for Jesus, broke an alabaster jar full of a very expensive perfume and poured its contents on his head. Jesus met this superb extravagance with an immediate defence of her deed against conventional criticism and with the grand promise that all over the world and for all time what she had done would be told in memory of her⁵.

2. Mt 14. 22-23; Mk 6. 45-52; Jn 6. 15-21

3. Lk 19. 1-10

4. Mk 10. 46-52; Mt 20. 29-34; Lk 18. 35-43

5. Mk 3-9; Mt 26. 6-13; Jn 12. 1-8

He astonished people

Jesus' teaching had in it a quality which attracted and delighted the multitudes. People flocked to hear him and followed him in great numbers, wondering at the graciousness of his words, and astonished at the power of persuasion that distinguished his teaching from that of their official instructors⁶. Even the temple police, sent to arrest him, succumbed to the spell of his words and returned without him for "nobody has ever talked the way this man does"⁷. One source of this attraction was the great little stories and parables Jesus told: creations of his imagination, which have stirred and comforted men for centuries; stories like the Lost Son and the Good Samaritan, and parables like the Explosive Wine and the Dying Seed⁸. Another source of the wonder of his words was the boldness of his conceptions. There was the traditional teaching: what had been said to men of old about not killing men and not dishonouring marriage, about justice with its an-eye-for-an-eye precision, about loving one's brother and hating one's enemy, and about laying up treasures as a proof and a sign of divine favour. All this was no slight matter, and it took courage to follow it. All the same Jesus thought man capable of responding to a challenge to achieve something far greater and more precious. He therefore proposed an original style of living – living out of an inner abundance and spontaneity and freedom. He suggested that we begin to love the unlovable and the enemy; that we gladly let the coat-grabber have our cloak also; that we learn to give and endlessly to forgive; that we transcend legal points and develop an inward reverence for women and men, and cast our care on God, without worrying about the future, like the birds and flowers; that we offer to go two miles when forced to go but one, and to do extra service out of sheer love and joy. For if we love only the lovable, and salute only our own relatives and club-men, and lend only to those whom we can expect to do us a good turn, we do nothing extraordinary, nothing born of imagination, nothing authentically mad which proclaims the com-

6. Lk 4. 22-32; 6. 17; Mt 4. 25; 5. 1; 7. 28; 8. 1;
Mk 1. 22

7. Jn 7. 46

8. Lk 15. 11-24; 10. 30-37; Mk 2. 22; Jn 12. 24

ing of God's Son to our earth⁹. The Sermon on the Mount is a clue to the new life and to Jesus' soul, to his imaginative thinking and the buoyancy of his endlessly creative fancy. On almost every point of tradition and every significant area of life, Jesus has something original and astonishing to say. "You have heard what men were told in the past; but now I tell you."

With the parable of the Unjust Steward Jesus re-interpreted the meaning of wealth as friendship: riches are a human blessing only as a sign and medium of brotherhood. When he therefore declared, in very picturesque language, that it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for those who thwart this basic orientation of wealth to enter God's Kingdom, the disciples were amazed and asked who, then, could be saved¹⁰. A similar astonishment was provoked when he neatly restored to women their dignity and right by the stand he took against divorce. The disciples exclaimed that if this was how it was between man and wife, it was better not to marry¹¹. People marvelled at Jesus' answers to questions put by the Pharisees about paying taxes to Caesar and about the woman married to seven brothers successively. The first of these questions he led from the political to the deeper level of service to man and God; and the other he lifted from the sphere of legalism to that of the Resurrection, life and love¹². Then there is the wonder of his all-judging, all-liberating word spoken to those who, in obedience to tradition and law, would kill a woman because she had sinned: "The one among you who has never committed a sin may throw the first stone at her."¹³ Creative answers keep customs and laws from freezing into prisons and chains for the human spirit. From them comes the imaginative agility that we require to tackle our problems in relevant and original way.

Unconventional behaviour

Jesus proved to be incalculable and inventive as much in his actions as in his words. The most surprising, perhaps, of his

9. Mt ch 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount. cf Lk 6 and 12.

10. Lk 16. 1-15; Mt 19. 20-26

11. Mt 19. 3-12

12. Mt 22. 15-22, 23-33

13. Jn 8. 1-11

gestures and the finest expression of his imagination was the Feet-Washing which John describes. Quite aware of his own greatness and dignity as lord and master who had come from God and was about to return to Him, Jesus knelt to his disciples and washed their feet and dried them with a towel. A simple action, an overwhelming disclosure of the mind and heart of God, a beautiful gesture of tenderness beyond measure, and a challenge of which the pressure never lifts from our hearts and the heart of our history. Who could ever have thought this up or fancied such a possibility except this man alone, this Jesus? He did it because he loved, and he loved his friends to the very end¹⁴. And love is imaginative and inventive. With this, Jesus created on our earth something startlingly new and inserted into religion and life and human relations something unsettling, subversive and dangerous, which we cannot afford to forget and are afraid to remember.

But it was only the high point of a series of shocks which Jesus administered to the people among whom he lived. In his society, the tax-gatherers in the service of the Roman overlords of Palestine were generally held to be sinners and treated as outcasts. No decent Jew, no pious Pharisee, surely no venerable Rabbi would associate with those despised men. This was the accepted pattern of thought and behaviour, and people conformed to it. Jesus, however, was too clear-sighted and independent a spirit merely to surrender to unexamined social pressures and prejudices. Openly and freely he lived in bad company, made friends with the tax gatherers, ate with them, stayed in their homes, and admitted some of them into the circle of his close followers. Respectable people were, of course, shocked. Why do you eat with outcasts, they asked. Why does he go as a guest to the home of a sinner? Jesus gave them a sarcastic answer: he was there for the sake of sinners: saints like his critics surely did not need him¹⁵. Had they been open to something better, Jesus could have introduced them to his own vision of man as the object of God's reverent compassionate love, and to the possibility of a new redemptive approach to the oppressed and the fallen. He did reveal to them, however, the fact - which was also

14. Jn 13. 1-17

15. Mt 9. 9-13; Lk 5. 27; 32-19. 1-10; Mk 2. 13-17

his own original creation – that the tax-collectors and prostitutes were going into the kingdom of God ahead of the respectable people¹⁶.

Behind such positions there is an original moral vision which only the imagination of Jesus could fashion. It is based on love and on concern for the good of man rather than on abstractions, establishments and systems. At Jacob's Well near Sychar in Samaria, Jesus must have foreseen that his disciples, on their return from the town where they had gone to buy food, would be greatly surprised to find him alone with a woman and talking with her. He could have guessed the question they would want, though not dare, to put to the woman: "What do you want?" and to him: "Why are you talking with her?"¹⁷. But he was not daunted by the possible scandal the small-souled could take, when it was necessary to honour this woman, recognize her person, and offer her the gift of God. He used the opportunity to create something new that transcended the conventional and the timid in moral attitudes, values and human relationships, and to lift up and redeem his disciples (of all times) from narrow-mindedness and spiritual shrinking.

To this creative hour he added another in the house of Simon the Pharisee. When Jesus was having a meal there, a woman of that town, who lived a sinful life, came in with an alabaster jar full of perfume and took her place at his feet, crying and wetting them with her tears. She then dried his feet with her hair and kissed them and poured the perfume on them. Simon was taken aback, scandalized. He disapproved of what the woman did; he disapproved even more vehemently of what Jesus did, or failed to do. In the circumstances, could Jesus really be what people thought he was? "If this man really were a prophet, he would know who this woman is who is touching him; he would know what kind of sinful life she leads." And if he knew, how could he let his feet be caressed by a prostitute? Simon was only echoing the judgement of a conventional society which had its own norms of correct conduct. But he had not reckoned with love nor with a very unconventional man. This

16. Mt 21. 28-32

17. Jn 4. 5-27

man, Jesus, had other norms for human relations and moral rectitude. He went by forgiveness and love, by kindness rather than animal sacrifice. He would acknowledge the right of true love to express itself in ways which the conventional, with its withered imagination, could not tolerate. This woman loved, and therefore she was no longer a sinner, but a virgin and saint. What Jesus was allowing and accepting was not self-seeking and sin, but an offering of honour and love together with their fragrant sacraments. Over against all that was represented by Simon, Jesus was creating for the world a morality with maturity and depth, and was revealing new dynamic approaches in the search for ways to appreciate the quality of human lives and of personal relationships, each in its mysterious uniqueness¹⁸.

Breaking down divisive walls

He showed similar resourcefulness in breaking down barriers which separated man from man, and in remoulding human relations. For, one of his great dreams was to transform mankind into a beautiful Friendship and a Brotherhood in which men truly care for one another. We call it the Church. Jesus initiated it by crossing the line which sought to keep the tax-gatherers at a distance. He crossed another when he asked the woman of Samaria for a drink of water and thus tore down traditional classifications of human beings, along with prohibitions and rules according to which utensils used by the Samaritans were taboo to the Jews¹⁹. He was generous in his praise of the religious spirit of non-Jews, and unfolded his vision of men from the East and the West united in the Kingdom of God²⁰. His tireless insistence on forgiving serves the same ideal of Friendship. How many times have we to forgive? Our imagination can rise to a maximum of seven. Jesus' swells to seventy times seven and to infinity²¹.

The openness Jesus taught was to be a liberation not only for individual followers but for the community of disciples. Once John told him how he had stopped a man who was driving out

18. Lk 7. 36-50

19. Jn 4. 7-10

20. Mt 8. 5-13; Mk 7. 24-30

21. Mt 18. 21-35; 7. 1-6; 5. 21-25, 38-42

devils in his name because he did not belong to their group. Jesus immediately invited the whole group to break out of all closed-club-mentality and all monopolistic thinking about God and his gifts. "Whoever is not against us is for us," he said²². That such greatness of vision is not easily assimilated is proved by much missionary history. It was to take years and centuries for his disciples to discover the catholicity and vast inner spaces of this church-creating word of Jesus. Meanwhile it is a witness to the immensity and imaginative freedom of Jesus' own mind.

Opposed to this openness and to the whole programme of Jesus is the common and conventional tendency to self-glorification and self-preference. Jesus therefore dealt with it in a radical way by a total reversal of positions and values. The Praying Pharisee listed facts, the Praying Publican sought mercy. The creative and revolutionary part of the story is that "everyone who makes himself great will be humbled" and, on the other hand, the humble will be made great²³. The reversal is illustrated again in the story of the Rich Dining Man. In his life he had all the good things, while Lazarus got all the bad things; after death their fortunes are reversed²⁴. The poor widow who dropped two little copper coins into the treasury had, in Jesus estimate, put in more than all the other contributors²⁵. For "Those who are last will be first and those who are first will be last." "For what men think is of great value is worth nothing in God's sight."²⁶

To the disciples, therefore, who argued most prosaically about which of them should be held the greatest, Jesus said, "The greatest one among you must be like the youngest, and the leader must be like the servant." And he added that he himself was among them as one who served²⁸. We remember that this Luken word has become flesh in the Johannine narrative of the

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- 22. Mk 9. 38-40; Lk 9. 49-50
 - 23. Lk 18. 9-14; 14. 11; Mt 23. 12
 - 24. Lk 16. 19-31
 - 25. Mk 12. 41-44; Lk 21. 1-4
 - 26. Mt 20. 1-16; Lk 16. 14-15
 - 27. Lk 18. 1-5; 23. 8-11
 - 28. Lk 22. 24-27

Feet-Washing; and nothing could bring home to us with greater force the centrality and vital import of the matter we are dealing with than Jesus' imaginative way of incarnating in himself this principle of reversal: 'I am your lord and master, and I have washed your feet.' For this reason, says Paul, God raised him to the highest place²⁹.

Liberation of religion

It is perhaps in the sphere of religion that Jesus' imagination proved most creative. The kernel of his vision was concisely expressed when he said, "The Sabbath was made for the good of man," and "What God requires is not sacrifice but kindness," and "This is what I command you: love one another."³⁰

As in everything else, in social customs and moral questions so in religion, Jesus had the boldness to place the human person at the decisive centre. For far too long had other realities or shadows occupied the centre and subordinated man. The Sabbath was one of these. Jesus took the matter in hand and corrected the twist in perspective. That he was able to do this with a point which had become an absolute in Jewish religion, which was utterly unquestionable and sacred and ancient, is testimony to the originality and independence of his thought and the resourcefulness of his imagination. He let hungry men pick ears of wheat on the Sabbath and eat the grain; on the Sabbath and in the synagogue he restored a man's withered hand, and straightened a woman crippled and bent for eighteen years. All this went against the most sacred of traditional laws as taught by Israel's masters. What he did therefore provoked protest, and exposed him to the fanatic's knife³¹. He knew this, but he could not, as he was asked to, give laws precedence over man or subordinate him to conventions. He thought man and his well-being more important and relevant than these to his Father's Realm. The Sabbath and the law were to find fulfilment in man.

29. Phil 2. 5-11; Jn 13. 13-15

30. Mk 2. 23-27; 12. 28-34; Mt 9. 10-13; 12. 5-7;
Jn 15. 12-17; 13. 34-35

31. Mt 12. 1-18; Mk 3. 1-6; Lk 13. 10-17;
Jn 5. 1-18; 9. 13-16, 24-34

Fasting is another observance that figures large in religions. Here again Jesus' attitude is dynamic and unconventional. He would not wholly reject fasting, nor let it assume the proportions it had in the minds of those who asked him, "Why is it that the disciples of John the Baptist and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but yours do not?" Jesus gave a refreshingly creative answer. Men can, at different times, have different experiences of the presence or the absence of God, varying experience of the joy of his love. It is by these experiences that spiritual disciplines and exercises like fasting are ruled, and not by external impositions or abstract norms. When the presence of Jesus is experienced as that of the Bridegroom, one is a guest at the wedding party that God is giving. Then one makes merry and does not mourn³². Jesus lived in the joy of the Holy Spirit, and ate and drank, and changed water into wine and multiplied bread for the hungry. But when he found himself in the desert with wild beasts, and was more aware of Satan's tempting presence than of the Father's comforting Hand, he went without food³³.

His imagination transformed religion from bondage into a liberating experience; from an oppressive burden into a joyous song. The Pharisees and teachers of the law had packed heavy loads and slung them round men's necks. They had imposed many ancestral traditions about vows and ablutions and many other matters, all of which had to be done in the proper way according to precise rules. But Jesus' disciples neglected these rules, for they felt that the Son had made them free. When this freedom was questioned and criticised, Jesus answered by neatly distinguishing the religion of the heart from the religion of the lips, and God's rules from man-made commandments³⁴. For us, then, religion is different, because Jesus came to proclaim liberty to the captives, to lift heavy loads from our shoulders, to give us rest, and bid us rejoice³⁵.

32. Mk 2. 18-20; Mt 11. 18-19; 22. 1-10; Rev 19. 7-9;
Isa 25. 6-8

33. Mt 4. 2; Lk 4. 2; Mk 1. 12. cf Lk 10. 21

34. Mk 7. 1-13; Mt 15. 1-9; Jn 8. 36; Gal 5. 1

35. Lk 4. 16-21; Mt 11. 28-30; Lk 15. 5-6, 8-9; 10. 23-24;
Jn 15. 11; 16. 21-24

It cost him something

In a socio-religious context which was spiritually settled and sure of itself, it was not easy for Jesus to be imaginative and to create something large for strictly prosaic and conventional men, for men who were incapable of wonder, and for others who would not let themselves be surprised. Two brothers, both of them Jesus' disciples, came to him with the very flat, commonplace request that the chairs nearest to the throne in his kingdom should be reserved for them. Jesus reacted by challenging them to be imaginative, to risk their life in high spiritual adventure and be ready to share the cup of sorrow and the baptism of a testing that were soon to be his. When the challenge proved creative, and the men said their 'Yes', Jesus liberated them from conventional ambitions which fell far short of the possibilities that were theirs as men and as his fellowmen³⁶.

It was these two disciples again that, in all too conventional fashion, thought that fire should be called down from heaven to destroy the people of a Samaritan village who had refused to receive Jesus. Jesus had to rebuke them for their old-fashioned and wholly unoriginal idea of merely repeating what Elijah had done centuries back, though a time was to come when his followers would actually burn to death those who, they thought, did not receive him or his truth. It is never easy for us to understand Jesus' dreams, to respond to his visions and to follow him to the heights of the Sermon on the Mount³⁷. It takes a lot of imagination to be a disciple of Jesus, and imagination is not always abundant even in his Church.

But while Jesus' disciples were ready to be re-educated and give themselves up to the wonder of the new life, there were others who refused to take notice of it or to be touched or moved even by miracles. The sight of a man who had been a helpless cripple for thirty years now walking steadily in perfect health, or of a man born blind now having perfect sight, could awaken in these Jews no sense of joy, astonishment, or even curiosity. They were capable only of worrying over the minutiae of observance of the Sabbath, for the healings had occurred on

36. Mk 10. 35-45; Mt 20. 20-28

37. Lk 9. 51-56

the Sabbath³⁸. Here was spiritual atrophy and senility of imagination. Similarly the city of Jerusalem and its leadership were too prudent and practical to surrender to the joy and surprise of an unusual and unconventional love that had come into their midst in the Person of Jesus. The coldness and rejection had wounded a very sensitive heart. Jesus cried: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how many times I wanted to put my arms around all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me!"³⁹. And in the North were the Lake cities Chorozain, Bethsaida and Capernaum; these too refused to wake and warm to the call of his miracles (most of which were performed in them) to rise to a new style of life shaped by love's imagination. Jesus therefore had sorrowfully to leave them alone in their insensitivity and staleness⁴⁰.

So Jesus loved us, and out of this love he thought and spoke, and sought to shape for us a lovely life exploding out of imagination, like a sky full of stars or a flowering grove. Therefore he could not care to conform or be particular about established ways, and was often quite unconventional in his relationships and imagination. Others were irritated. He created enemies among the settled, practical, successful, rational men of his community. These men used the customary, conventional tactics to suppress him. They told the people that he was crazy and had gone mad. They said he was possessed, and had a demon in him, and was in collusion with Beelzebul, the president of demondom. They called him a Samaritan, a glutton and a wine-drinker, a blasphemer and sinner. And when these calumnies did not quite work, they killed him⁴¹.

But the dreams he released into the current of human history live, and he lives too. And the creations of his brilliant mind have made possible for us an existence which always keeps bubbling up into eternal life.

Aarhus, Denmark

Samuel Rayan

38. Jn 5. 1-16; 9. 1-45

39. Lk 13. 34-35; Mt 21. 37-9

40. Mt 11. 20-24; Lk 10. 13-15

41. Mk 3. 21-22; Mt 11. 19; Jn 7. 12, 20; 8. 48-52; 9. 24; 10. 20, 33

Christ(ology) as Creative Mystery

Today there is much talk about the theology of everyday things and the theology of almost everything. So much, indeed, that one tends to become skeptical about theologies. The reaction is a sign of a desire to discover the core of theology itself. For, if a theology of culture or development or revolution is constructed merely because it is the fashion of the day, it will surely turn out to be neither sound theology nor genuine anthropology. Unless the theological response to the need of the hour emerges from the urge of a lived Christ-mystery, it will sound quite empty. For the Christ-mystery is the basic creative potential which impels and inspires the Christian to give expression to his vision of faith. Creativity in theology springs from the experience men have, in concrete situations, of the mystery of Christ who is the creative Word of the Father.

Our primary concern is to see how the mystery of Christ is creative, how in his Person and ministry Jesus has manifested the creative dimensions of his mission. Obviously, the creative and inventive aspects of man's response to Christ cannot be kept out of such a study but they will remain subordinate in our consideration of the subject in question. We would like to concentrate on the Christ-mystery itself.

When we speak of the Christ mystery as creative, we cannot isolate it from other valid types of creative experience. For, creative experience of any kind, in poetry, music, painting, etc. (could one list also the complex issues of scientific creativity?) is basically an experience of being invaded, enveloped and encountered by 'the other'. At its source it is an experience of finding a new vision and accepting a new relation. It is, in other words, a call to be at the service of the Creator Spirit. Somehow

a mystery, known or unknown, is operative in every creative inspiration.¹

Naturally, the various aspects and perspectives of the inexhaustible mystery of Christ are expressed in various ways in different cultural and historical traditions. Our own search for an Indian theology will have to be inspired by a thoughtful and prayerful realization of this mystery and by surrender to its creative power. We take for our starting-point the Gospel of John, in which we have the result of a quest, guided by the Spirit, for a personal experience of faith in Christ, and in which the Indian mind feels at home. Appasamy's *Theology of Bhakti*² and Abhisiktananda's *Hindu-Christian Encounter*³ demonstrate a sense of connaturality between the Johannine and Indian approaches to the Divine.

The Prologue of John

In the Prologue, in the light of which the entire work is meant to be read Jesus is introduced as God's greatest and definitive creative self-expression. The Evangelists have a way of beginning their Gospels by tracing the activity of Jesus back to its beginning: Mark to the appearance of the Baptist and the baptism of Jesus; Mathew and Luke, to the birth of Jesus from the Virgin, with genealogies going back to Abraham, and to Adam. John goes farther back to the creation of the world and beyond it. The opening words, "In the beginning", contain an allusion to Genesis 1. 1. This is meant not only to show that, with the coming of Jesus, there is a new creation, and the first was a type of the second; it means in particular to emphasise the creative role of Jesus. For he is God's Word who existed in the beginning and through whom all things came into being. Strikingly enough, John does not call Christ Creator, (that is a title reserved in the New Testament for the Father), but affirms the vital role the Word plays in the creation of the universe.

1. Rahner, K. "Poet and Prophet" in *Theological Investigations*, V
2. Appasamy, A. J., *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study of the Johannine Doctrine of Love*, CLS, Madras, 1928.
3. Abhisiktananda, *Le Saux, La Rencontre de L'Hindouisme et du Christianisme*, Paris 1968.

Life too is presented in relation to the Word. For John, life signifies some kind of sharing in the being of God. The new life in Grace and Truth as against the old one in the Law, is a participation in God's own life. But it is through the One who has manifested God that the gift of life comes to us. In John's view, then, the revelation of the Father in Jesus Christ coincides with the creation and communication of the new life.

The Word's becoming flesh is the ultimate and seminal creative act, and the source of all further creative potential. The term Word is used only in the Prologue to designate the Son, but that does not mean that it was only a passing thought for the Evangelist. On the contrary, the idea represented by the term dominates John's Christology. But he rightly avoids the term after the climax reached in the proclamation, "the Word became Flesh". For from this point on, the significant fact is that for John the Word is relevant only within the recognition and confession that it became flesh.

The transcendence of the creative Word was now present and operative in our human flesh and among us within our history. To his personal experience of this new reality, John gives witness in the words, "We saw his glory". Undoubtedly, he intends to give to this word its full significance. *Doxa* or glory in the Old Testament (Is 60. 1) and in the New (Mk 8. 38) means pre-eminently God's creative presence or the manifestation of his saving activity. It is this creative activity of reshaping life that John describes and meditates on in a number of chapters which follow the prologue.

The Book of Signs

In view of the explanation the evangelist gives in ch. 12, the first part of the Gospel may be called the book of signs⁴. The word sign occurs there repeatedly. Pre-eminent among these are Jesus' miracles of which John records only seven. They are called signs not only because they are worked to encourage belief but because they signify who Christ is, — the presence of the creative power of the Father, made manifest in human reality: the Flesh. We shall remark upon three of these signs.

4. Dodd, C. H. *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, Cambridge, 1968.

The wedding at Cana, the first sign. Just as this Gospel begins with an evident allusion to Genesis 1. 1, so too the seven-day structure of the original creation story is imitated in what follows the Prologue, culminating in the first manifestation of Jesus' creative power. The wedding feast at Cana takes place on the seventh day of the new creation story (a symbolism, of course, rather than historical chronology is in question). John has deliberately arranged the chronology so as to describe this seventh day also as the third day thus evoking the memory of the Resurrection, the ultimate form of the New Creation and the principle of the New World. In the miracle of changing water into wine, the glory of Jesus was revealed, and his disciples believed in him. They were now for the first time confronted with something greater than what the Baptist had pointed to. With God's saving creative power now made manifest in Jesus, the disciples could pass beyond that stage of the history of salvation represented by the Precursor. This first disclosure at Cana initiated the disciples into the great revelation which would finally be summed up in the words, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father... the Father who remains in me does his own works" (Jn 14. 9).

The man born blind, the sixth sign. This narrative, with its clear references to ideas in the Prologue, occupies an important position in the book of signs. In the account in chapters 2 to 7 the theme of life is predominant: rebirth, living water, the bread of life. The present section focuses on the aspect of light. The healing of the blind man is conceived of as a sign of the triumph of light over darkness. The light that is life, that is the creative Word, is now active on earth in the lives of men. The clue to the meaning of the sign is provided at three points. First, in Jesus' answer to the question as to the cause of the man's blindness: "He is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in him." Secondly, in an answer the man gave on being cross-questioned by religious authorities. "Since the beginning of the world, it has never been heard of that someone opened the eyes of a blind man; unless this man came from God he could not have done a thing." And thirdly in Jesus judgement on the blindness of the Pharisees. "Do not believe, then, if I am not doing my Father's works. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, you should believe my works in order that you may know once for all that the Father is in me and I am in the

Father" (Jn 10. 37). John's concern here is to point out that the Father testifies to his Son's works while the Son himself performs the Father's will. Here is a mystery of mutual creative presence.

Lazarus brought to life, the seventh sign. John concludes the first part of his book with the last and greatest of the special signs. The creative dimension of Jesus' mission is revealed in his reaction to the message that came from Martha and Mary. The Message said, "Your friend is ill." And Jesus answered, "This happens to give glory to God, and the sickness will be the means by which God will give glory to his Son" (Jn 11. 4). John therefore intends to teach that even as the Father is the source of life, so too he has made the Son to be the source of life. The Son is sent with a creative mission, and the Father himself bears witness to it. "... if God's glory (creative presence) is revealed through him (the Son), then God himself will reveal the glory of the Son" (Jn 13. 32; cf 12. 28).

The Book of Exaltation (ch 13-20)

All through the book of signs, Jesus is represented as conferring on men the light and life which belong to the New Age, but enshrined in signs. The reality lies within the signs. In order that we may penetrate to the reality, the death and resurrection of Jesus must be made actual, a present personal experience through his Spirit (Jn 7. 39). Hence in John's gospel, the Christ of the book of signs is one who dies and rises. This truth about him is the essential presupposition of his ministry. Christ's works are signs of his 'finished work'. The signs are true provided that he who works them is the Father's Son who was exalted through the cross. With the passion, the hour had come for the Son of man to be given great glory (Jn 12. 23; 17. 5).

The book of exaltation, then, leads us right into the secret of the creative function of Jesus' ministry, and the discourse during the Supper interprets for us the meaning of the passion. The hour of his suffering was like the hour of travail for a woman (cf Jn 16. 21). There is perhaps a reference here to the Jewish theme of the birth-pangs of the Messiah. What is relevant for us however is this: Jesus, through the birth-pangs of his passion, communicates life to those who accept him in faith, so that they may become sons of God. It is the hour of the

glorification of the Son so that the Son may glorify the Father by giving life to men (Jn 17. 1). The hour of exaltation, in the light of the Prologue, reveals to us Jesus' creative fidelity to his Father.

Christological Vision

We have pondered over John's presentation of Christ's Person and Ministry: in the Prologue, as the creative Word of the Father; in three great signs, as the glory of the Father become manifest; and in the exaltation as the supreme dedication to the Father. Let us now assemble these in order to arrive at an outline of John's Christology.

For John, Christ is God's Word made flesh and sojourning in our midst. He is Emmanuel. The Incarnation is a divine self-communication. Through it God's life is communicated to man; and to everyone who is open to this communication, power is given to become the sons of God. The Christ-mystery not only creates this power within us but also creatively provokes within us the openness required for its reception.

Christ is there not only that we may have life but may have it in abundance. We have seen his glory, full of grace and truth, and out of the fullness of his grace, he has blessed us all, giving us one blessing after another (Jn 1. 14, 16). Hence the Incarnation is more than the healing presence of God for a wounded race, is more than restoration of some lost condition. It is a presence creative of fullness.

But ultimately Christ communicates to us more than right and power. These themselves are given through a communication of himself. For he is the living bread come down from heaven to give life to man; his very flesh and blood are food and drink by which we begin to live in him and he in us (Jn 6). His self-communication to us and our participation in his flesh and blood are capable of remaking us so radically as to make us God's sons, because of his unique relation to the Father, because of his oneness with him. In Jesus it is the Father's creative love that has appeared on earth and touched our life. The Father who made nothing without the Word, continues ever his creative and re-creative work in and through the incarnate Word. Jesus' Father

works always, and Jesus too works... what the Father does, the Son also does, for the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing (Jn 5. 17-20).

It is finally, in the oneness of the Father and the Son, and in their mutual presence that John finds all the mystery of Christology hidden. And within it he brings together the redemptive and the creative mysteries and realizes their union in the Paschal event. John's Christology becomes for us a creative mystery in that it leads us to the knowledge of the Father himself. "This is eternal life: for men to know you the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ whom you sent" (Jn 17. 3).

The meeting of two creativities

Does this vision of John's inspire us to respond to today's search for originality and creativity in theology? If so, how does it guide us practically towards realizing an Indian Theology?

The Christological vision of John offers us a basic approach. We can never afford to lose sight of John's focal point that in Christ it is not man that became God, but God that became man. John sees the secret and the beauty of the creative power of the Christ-mystery in its function of making the Father's presence manifest itself. It is in this relation of intimate sharing between the Father and the Son that John unveils for us the basis of all creativity. The Christ-mystery presented by John reminds us that our search for creativity is ultimately born of our vocation to share in the unique relation of oneness and mutual presence which Jesus has with his Father. We are destined to be one in them as they are in each other (Jn 17. 21).

In and through this mystery, then, one is initiated into a process of creative participation. Ultimately it is God's Word to us in Jesus that creates in us the capacity to give a response, and shapes the response along with us. No one goes to the Father except by Jesus, and no one comes to Jesus unless drawn by the Father (Jn 14. 6; 6. 44). We are enabled to participate in the response Jesus himself gives to the Father. The divine initiative in Jesus seeks and elicits a creative response from man in order that the radical creative potential in man may find fulfilment. This meeting of the creative initiative and creative

response, then, becomes the source of further creative thinking and acting in any area of life.

How does this creative initiative address us in concrete terms? As the creative Word dwelt among us revealing his intimate communion with the Father, we are called to be fully committed to our brothers, children of the Father (1 Jn 3.14). As the miracle-signs of Jesus manifested the glory of the Father, we are invited to offer service-signs so that we may be recognized as his disciples (Jn 15.35). And like Christ who suffered the birth-pangs during his passion proving his absolute devotion to the Father, we are impelled to testify to our dedication by participating in the sufferings of his children (1 Jn 3.17).

It seems to me that what Ananda Coomaraswamy has to say on Art and creativity is relevant here. "The vision of beauty is spontaneous... It is a state of grace that cannot be achieved by deliberate effort, for there are many witnesses that the secret of all creativity is to be found in self-forgetfulness"⁵. But the specific character of the Christian creative experience lies in the fact of being called to the service of the mystery of Christ who has chosen us and appointed us to go and bear much fruit (Jn 15.16).

Paris

Xavier Irudayaraj

5. Coomaraswamy, A., *The Dance of Siva*, Asia Publishing House, 1948.

Christology and the Spiritual Heritage of Mankind

Today we live in a unique moment of the 'history of salvation'. International organisations and means of communication have brought peoples and nations closer to one another than they have ever been before. Insights into the past and hopes for the future invite the two hemispheres of East and West to a heart-to-heart dialogue. The encounter of religions leads modern man to an ever deepening perception of the Dynamics of the Spirit in history. This experience of the spiritual heritage of mankind imparts a sense of fulfilment to the 'seekers of truth' in their relentless search. For many others it has caused an identity crisis.

In the face of this new opening out of the Spirit one asks oneself: What does Christ mean to mankind? What is the role of Christology in a pluralistic world?

No attempt is made in these pages at a scientific analysis of the problem or to propose any theory on the salvific value of the religions of the world. We would like only to sit meditatively for a while before the Mystery of the Word of God: to experience the *transcendence* of this Mystery and to acknowledge our human *limitations*. What we should do at the outset of this meditative search is to pray with Arjuna:

*Manyase yadi tad ūkyaṁ mayō draṣṭum iti prabho
yog eśvara tato me tvam darsay itmīnam avyayam.*

If you, O Lord, think it possible for me to see it, then, do, O Lord of creative power, show me your imperishable Self (Bhagavad Gita, 11:4).

The Reality of the Incarnation

In the beginning was the Word,
the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

John begins his gospel with a contemplation on the unfathomable mystery of the Word of God: the Word is eternal and divine; it is the source of all beings and the light of all men; it is power and glory...

And John proceeds straight to a paradoxical climax: "... and the Word was made flesh". The Word that was God embedded itself in flesh. The divine Power came down in the form of a frail human being. The Glory of God appeared in the bondage of matter. There is significance in John's pointed use of the word 'flesh': He is focussing his vision on the two immanent dimensions of the Christ-event: the *reality* of the Incarnation and the *limited-ness* of God-made-man. The Word of God *really* became man, with a human body and a human soul. He was genuinely one of us and dwelt in our midst. Jesus of Nazareth was fully a man of his times, and as man he was subject to the limitations of his age and culture. The self-manifestation of the Word of God took place *from within* these limitations. As man he could not be a man of all centuries and of all cultures. The Word of God that 'enlightens' all ages and dynamises all cultures is objectively there in His unlimitedness in this limited man; but this Word of God encountered mankind from within the *limited-ness* of his manhood and his Jewish-Palestinian milieu. The reality of the Incarnation thus brings us face to face with the fact that the Word of God transcends the earthly life of the man Jesus of Nazareth. As a concrete historical realisation in a given period of time and in a particular culture Jesus of Nazareth could not have exhausted the Word of God.

The Word of God is immanent in Jesus of Nazareth; but it is immanent as a *transcendental* reality. With the Word-immanence in Jesus Christ, God encountered mankind in history. This is the *response* of God to the quest of man. But since this response was nothing less than the free self-gift of God Himself it transcends any given period of history. Hence the response in Jesus Christ is also a *call* directed to man: a call to go unceasingly in pursuit of the Christological dimensions that transcend the concrete historical self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Christology should go *beyond* Jesus of Nazareth.

Experience of the Mystery

John's contemplation of the reality of the Incarnation brings to light the limitations of the *disciples* too. Towards the end of his earthly sojourn, we find Jesus painfully complaining to his disciples: "Have I been with you all this time, and you still do not know me?" (Jn 14:9) In spite of his intimate friendship with the disciples, he remained a mystery to them. It could not be otherwise, because the disciples and the Jewish people encountered Jesus *from within* the limitations of their patterns of thought and religio-national expectations. Jesus was immanent in their milieu, but he also *transcended* it.

Let us go one step further along these lines of the theology of the Incarnation. The outpouring of the Spirit from the Word of God gave the first Christian communities further insights into the Christ-event. The word-made-man continues to work in the Church through the Spirit. The Spirit is the *Parakletos* (Advocate) who remains with the Church for ever (Jn 14:16), leads men to the fullness of Truth (Jn 16:13) and joy (Jn 15:11) and peace (Jn 14:27). The Spirit teaches men to understand the Mystery of Christ: the meaning of His words (Jn 2:19), His actions (Jn 2:22) and His 'Signs' (Jn 14:26, 16:23), all hitherto obscure to the disciples (Jn 12:16, 13:7, 20:9). This Spirit works in the community to bear witness to Christ (Jn 15:26). John thus sees the advent of the Spirit in the wider context of the Incarnation of the Word.

The dynamic force that worked in the first Christian communities was the Spirit of the Word. But in this encounter too we observe the limitations of the human counterpart. According to Paul's theology, the Christian communities experienced God's Self revelation in Jesus Christ through the working of the Spirit (I Cor. 2:10f.). But this experience was basically an experience of a *Mystery*. The Wisdom of God (I Cor. 2:7), its revelation in the Person of Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:25), its realisation through the Spirit (Eph. 3:5) and the presence of Christ in the Church (Col. 1:27), were all a 'mystery'. God had now revealed His hidden plan of salvation (Eph. 1:9) in Jesus Christ. The Mystery of God was no more '*something obscure*', but '*Someone*' that had encountered mankind. "The Mystery is Christ among you." (Col. 1:27)

Their contact with the mystery of salvation was an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ. This encounter therefore demanded a dynamic response that embraced the total man. Paul met Christ as Someone beyond his grasp. This gave him dynamism and fulfilment in life. "All I want is to know Christ... I follow after to see if indeed I may grasp, inasmuch as I was grasped by Christ Jesus... All I can say is that I forget the past and I strain ahead for what is still to come..." (Phil. 3:10) Thus the dynamic presence of the Spirit called Paul and the first Christian communities *out of* themselves (cf Gen. 12:1f). The Spirit was immanent in the communities, but it was immanent as a *transcendental* Power. Hence the more we focus our attention on the dynamics of the Spirit in the Church (Pneumatology) the more acutely we become aware of the vivifying presence of the same Spirit at the heart of the entire history of mankind. The Spirit forces our Christological contemplations into openness to history and liberty in Christ.

The Word of God and the words of man

In Jesus of Nazareth the Word became man; in the Scriptures he became 'word' again. The Word of God took the form of the words of man. The Word of God became incarnate in the language and thought-patterns of the Jewish-Hellenistic milieu of the first century. Here again, the reality of the Incarnation makes us aware of the limitations in the *self-expression* of the Word of God. In spite of the inspirational guidance of the Spirit, the writers of the New Testament Books were men of their times *limited* by the particular culture of their group and their personal talents and experience of life. In transmitting the authentic faith-experience of the communities, they had to rely on contemporary forms of expression within the limits of language and imagery familiar to their milieu. Language in itself is the expression of the Spirit; but it is also the expression of the limitation of the Spirit. Hence, once again we are brought back to the basic fact of the self-revelation of God: the Word of God is immanent in the Scriptures; but it is immanent as a *transcendental* reality. The richness of the Word of God cannot be exhausted by any concrete realization of God-experience or by any particular Holy Book. The *particularity* of the Scripture does not exclude the universality of the Word of God.

The Christologies of the New Testament

Let us go back once again to the contemplation of the Mystery of Christ in the first Christian communities. The various groups and, correspondingly, the various authors of the New Testament Books, tried to get into the mystery of salvation in their own way. Hence we find already in the New Testament a rich *pluralism* in Christology. The Synoptics describe at greater length the earthly life of Jesus leading up to His glorification (upward Christology). Mark presents Jesus as the *Suffering Servant* who at the heart of the human race experiences the mystery of the Cross, which finally leads him to Glory. Matthew's Jesus is the *Emmanuel*, the God-with-us, in whom the promises of the Old Israel are transcendently fulfilled and prolonged into the New Israel. Luke sees Jesus primarily as the *Saviour* of mankind whose salvific work provides God's answer to the religious aspirations of the Hellenistic world. The mystery of the glorious pre-existence of the *Word of God* runs through John's Christological contemplations. Paul dwells on the living presence of Christ in the Christian communities and on the *universal* significance of the Christ-event. Thus there is *not one* Christology in the New Testament but several.

Behind this pluralism in approach to the Christ-event, we observe the firm conviction of the first Christians, that the Word of God encountered them in the Person of Jesus Christ as a Mystery, and hence as something that transcended their full grasp. The Christology of New Testament times was thus a relentless Christian quest after the manifold dimensions of the Word of God. It was dynamic not only in content, but in its entire approach too.

The Pilgrim Church's Quest after the Word

This sense of mystery continued to influence deeply the approaches to Christ in the early centuries. For Ignatius of Antioch Christ's salvific work and its continuation in the Church was a 'great mystery'. Gregory of Nyssa sees in the darkness of Mount Sinai the figurative presentation of all that we can know about God. Even the early Christological heresies were in fact honest attempts of frail human minds to grasp the mystery of salvation. In their struggle against misconceptions in faith, the

Fathers of the Church put emphasis not so much on dogmatic formulations as on the basic incomprehensibility of the divine Mystery. A shift of emphasis from living contemplation of the work of salvation to abstract conceptualisation of the nature of Christ came later. The Council of Calcedon couched the dogma on Christ in metaphysical terms, which came to form the backbone of traditional Christology in the Church. Now that abstract metaphysics has lost its dominance in the thought-system of people, the Church has to find out new forms of expression to make the original experience more relevant and fruitful. Moreover, Calcedon's formulation need not be the last word in Christology, because the Christ-event remains, till the end of time, an unfathomable Mystery with a universal significance, calling for ever deeper and fuller appreciation and expression. In no particular age can the Church claim that she has grasped fully the mystery of salvation. The Church finds herself always within the *limitations* of time and culture. The Word of God is immanent in the Church, but it is immanent as a *transcendental* reality. It is far greater than her, and her theological analyses and dogmatic formulations.

The approaches to Christ in the New Testament and in the early centuries had a rich pluralism and a fruitful vitality, because they were lived contemplations on the *mystery* of the Word of God. Once these contemplations became crystallised in certain static formulations about the nature and person of Jesus Christ, the aspect of mystery lost its dynamism. As a result, Christology became a branch of speculative theology, without much relevance to the day-to-day life of the vast majority of people. The 'theology of the Cross' of the Reformers included a protest against this tendency to subject God to systematisation. The critical quest of the historical Jesus in the 19th and the early 20th century too was at heart a reaction against 'dogmatism in Christology' (Albert Schweitzer). Today's atheism - better to say anti-theism - is perhaps an honest search for the real God, for the authentic experience of the Word of God in history. "The battle against present-day atheism can only be correctly waged if it is also understood to involve the destruction of false and primitive ideas of God (Vat. II: *Gaudium et Spes*, 19); then a

theology of the mystery is an urgent task." (Karl Rahner, *Sacramentum Mundi*, 'Mystery').

The Sense of Mystery in Man's Self-Discovery Today

The reflections we have made till now on the reality of the Incarnation and on the reality of the human limitations in the encounter between God and man, give us a negative ground for being open in Christological approaches. Now we would like to focus our attention on certain 'signs of the times' that seem positively to urge this task of opening out our vision of Christ.

A phenomenon that seems to dominate today's way of life and thought is *secularisation*. But deep within this trend there is an undercurrent of *spiritualisation*. Even in the positive sciences there is a strong passion to put man at the centre of observation. The future of science seems to be taking shape anthropocentrically. But this 'man' at the heart of knowledge and reality is growing into a great 'mystery' for the scientist. The awakening to the deep spiritual dimensions of man has put the scientist face to face with the great Mystery that envelops him. Mankind is once more coming back to the awareness of the Mystery that is God. The Spirit is dynamising today's man to look for authentic religious experience. The encounter of the religions of the world as well as some of the new movements that have recently appeared in Western society expresses this dynamism of the Spirit.

Disgusted with all that mere material progress can offer, many people in Europe and America are turning to solitude and meditation to rediscover the lost dimensions of life. Youth seeks a new ideal in Jesus Christ: 'Superstar'. An effort to rethink the formulations of Christian faith is found in theological circles. The two spiritual hemispheres of the East and the West are coming closer and closer in a heart-to-heart dialogue. Courses on the spirituality of the East are being conducted in different parts of the Western world. In the non-Christian circles of the East too there is a growing interest in a dialogue with Christianity.

The history of religions is no more considered an accidental phenomenon in the evolution of mankind; it is looked upon as the "history of God's dialogue with mankind". This dialogue had been going on all these centuries in varying degrees at the different stages of social evolution. Today we have come to a unique moment of this God-man dialogue. We experience a new Epiphany of the Spirit in today's world. Thanks to our means of communication and to international organisations, an all-embracing encounter between peoples and cultures is taking place. The world is growing smaller and man more universal. The Spirit is leading today's man to be open to the rich heritage of the past and to the promises of the future. Man is becoming increasingly conscious of the Immanence and Transcendence of the *Word* through the *Spirit* in the spiritual heritage of mankind. Into this inner shrine of the God-man encounter the Spirit invites man: "Come!" (cf. Apoc. 22/17). The response from the side of man should be an open and relentless search for the deeper and all-embracing dimensions of the "dialogue of God with mankind". Christology is ultimately this passionate search of the spirit for the *universal Christ*.

An Open Christology

Thus in our approaches to Christology we are called upon to maintain a radical openness to the universal Christ. On the one hand, we have become acutely conscious of the limitations that lie between the Self-revelation of the Word of God and our response to it. On the other, we are given a lot of insights into the rich dialogue of the Word with man in the course of the centuries.

There is first of all the limitation of the man Jesus of Nazareth. Then, we come across the disciples and the multitudes that met Jesus, but did not understand much of what he was. Even after the coming of the Spirit, the first Christian communities experienced the Christ-event as something "greater than our heart". When this experience was transmitted through the Scriptures to later generations there came in the limitations of language and concrete categories of thought. And finally, the Church finds herself always within the limitations of time and culture. With the new awakening of the Spirit, today's man has

come to experience these limitations and correspondingly the unfathomableness of the divine Mystery. This sense of mystery has opened out his vision to the universality of the spiritual heritage of mankind. At this moment of the "history of God's dialogue with mankind" a genuine Christology cannot but be radically open to this spiritual heritage. It is basically openness to the Word that is the "true light that enlightens all men" (Jn 1: 9) and to the Spirit that brings everything to fulfilment (Eph. 3: 16f).

If the dialectics between experience and Mystery, between the Immanence and Transcendence of the Spirit in history, is going to be the dynamics of an open Christology, the spiritual heritage of India offers a very fruitful soil for its growth. Right from the Upaniṣadic times to the period of the modern Hindu Renaissance the Divine is experienced in India as an unfathomable Mystery that envelops mankind and the cosmos (Cf. Isha Up. 1: 1, Brh. Up. 1: 3: 28, the works of Sri Aurobindo, Tagore and others). The aspirations of humanity for the *Sambhava* (becoming) of the *Bhagavan* (Lord) are crystallised in the *Bhagavad Gita*. In the *Gita*'s vision of Incarnation the divine Mystery is deeply involved in the destinies of man (immanence); but at the same time it remains unexhausted by any particular realisation in time and space (transcendence) (cf. 4: 7f, 11: 3f). This dialectics between experience and Mystery is an important element in the right understanding of India's quest after God. The insight of the Indian R̄sis will help our Christological contemplations to grasp the deeper dimensions of the Word of God that came down to our *Karmakṣetra* (field of activity).

In Search of the Universal Christ

The Word of God is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ not as a monopoly of the Christian churches, but as a Mystery within the heart of the spiritual history of mankind. The Word of God is immanent in this spiritual history, but it is immanent as a transcendental power. The dialectics between immanence and transcendence is in fact the force that worked in the history of man's search for God through the centuries. As man, Christ Himself shared the experience of this dialectics. The Church of Jesus Christ has no access to the deep dimensions of the Word of God except through this painful and relentless process of

search. And the search means a radical openness to the presence of the Word in the different religions, and to the breath of the Spirit in the various moments of world history. From the Self-revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ we know that the Word has penetrated humanity quite *radically*. This in turn guarantees the challenging *universality* of the Word in the spiritual heritage of mankind. We are not led, on this account, to scepticism or relativism in Christology but to openness to the 'demonstration of the power of the Spirit' (I Cor. 2: 5) in the course of the evolution of mankind in pursuit after the *Pleroma* (Fullness).

Christology consists, therefore, not merely in dwelling on the words of Jesus in the New Testament or reflecting over the initial Christian understanding of the Christ-event. Christology is not merely a repetition of the dogmatic formulation of Calcedon, which is only a milestone in the entire pilgrimage of the Church in search of Christ, in whom she exists, and whom she has found, and must find ever more fully and deeply. Scripture and Tradition are not a demand to us to find settled quarters on the shores of time, but a challenge to be always on the move – to go forward from today to tomorrow in quest of the Word of God who in the person of Jesus Christ "calls us out of ourselves" (cf. Gen. 12: 1f; Mk. 1: 18). This forward march cannot be confined to any particular theological tradition, because Christ embraces the entire past, present and future of mankind. The search after Christ must go on till the *Parousia*, when the *Pleroma* of Christ will be revealed to the entire human race. It should be an honest and open search for the "breadth and length, height and depth" of the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3: 18). Christology will thus lead us to become "fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself" (Eph. 4: 13). And, this fullness will transcend all given times and cultures, religions and theologies.

The Christology of the future will be an open Christology. It will be a contemplation of the mystery of the Word of God that is dynamically present in world-religions and in world-events. The Word of God will be experienced not merely as a revelatory event of the past, but as a force in history, as a Person of today, who calls, demands, enriches and fulfils. A

radically open encounter with the Mystery of the Word will give rise to several *Christologies* in the future. The person of Christ will be in all of them, but will transcend them all. In all of them together, He will be more adequately understood and expressed and loved. All of them will remain open to one another and to the future, and ultimately to the Spirit Himself. A pluralistic Christology will not be the fruit of "the arguments that belong to philosophy, but only a demonstration of the power of the Spirit" (I Cor. 2: 5).

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Christ - the Guru

The guru in Hindu tradition is as ancient as the *Upaniṣads*, if not older¹. The *Upaniṣads* are instruction imparted by gurus to their *śiṣyas* or disciples seated close by. The guru is also as modern as Gandhiji who wrote, "I believe in the Hindu theory of guru and his importance in spiritual realization. I think there is a great deal of truth in the doctrine that true knowledge is impossible without a guru"². Contemporary phenomena like LSD trips, Rock-religion and transcendental meditation show how men today are searching for religious experience, and how Western youth come to the East in the hope of finding gurus who can guide them in the path of personal realization. Psychotherapy and counselling manifest many traits of the guru idea. For these reasons and for the reason that the Church in India has the responsibility to approach the Christ-mystery in terms of the key concepts of India's religious culture, we think that a little reflection on the idea of the guru is relevant and important.

Here we can only indicate the elements of a full study that has yet to be made. The source-material in Hindu tradition for this study is immense, even if one selects only non-controverted texts. For the present we shall restrict ourselves to three types of sources: 1, the popular Hindu attitude to the guru; this is important from the socio-religious point of view; 2, the *Upaniṣadic* thought on the guru; this formed the nucleus for the later *gurukula* ideal found in Manu's law and in the *Dharmaśātras*; and 3, the *Siddhāntic* view of the guru; this offers us the *agamic* conception common to the three major sects in Hinduism, namely *Vaiṣṇavism*, *Śaivism* and *Saktism*³.

1. See *Rgveda* 4. 50. 79; *Atharva Veda* 11. 5. 14.

2. Gandhi M. K., *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, I, p. 211.

3. *Gurukula*: system of education in which small groups of disciples live for years with the guru as members of his family. *Manu*, the person who is supposed to have codified;

A. The Guru in Hindu Tradition

I. In popular Hindu belief

In *The Daily Practices of the Hindus* one reads: "In the morning let him remember his guru, utter his name, and think of him (as dwelling) in the white lotus of his head... next to the great God in his three-fold aspect... There is no higher object of veneration and homage for man than his gurudeva"⁴. The Hindu is reminded to invoke the guru not only at the beginning of the day but also at the beginning of every important undertaking, especially of literary works and of artistic performances: the *guru añjali* (salutation to the guru with joined hands) and the *guru pūja* (reverence to the guru).

Altar Flowers, a bouquet of select Sanskrit hymns, has a hymn on the guru which is an invocation that precedes every Hindu recital: "The guru is Brahma, the guru is Visnu, the guru is Siva, the guru is Brahman himself. Salutation to the guru"⁵. There is another hymn in the same vein, attributed to Sankara: "one's body may be handsome, one's wife may be beautiful... but if one's mind is not attached to the lotus-feet of the guru, what thence, what thence?"⁶ A common saying found in the *Varuda Bhakti Sutras* reads, "If Hari is vexed but the guru is pleased, the guru will protect you; if all others are pleased and the guru annoyed, there is no one able to protect you." The opening line of *Bhakti-Māla* mentions the four requisites of religion, and the guru is one of them: *Bhakti*, *Bhakta*, *Bhagavanta* and *Guru*. So also among the four great sins enumerated in Hindu ethics is found the violation of the guru's bed. Rāmdās sub-

in the pre Christian era, ancient Hindu laws and customs. *Dharmaśāstra*: traditions and treatises on *dharma* or duty and religion. *Siddhānta*: literally, what is established by argument and investigation; technically, name of the Saivite doctrine codified in the 13th century after Christ. *Agamic*: pertaining to agamas or religious traditions.

4. Sri Chandra Vasu, *The Daily Practices of the Hindus*
5. Advaita Ashram, *Altar Flowers* (Calcutta 1968) p. 268
6. Mahadevan T.M.P., *The Hymns of Sankara* (Madras 1970), p. 29.

scribes to the saying that "Even God cannot grant *Mokṣa*, only the Guru can."

It is thus clear that there is something sacred about the guru. He is more than a mere teacher. The secular and semi-secular teacher are called *Acāryā* and *Upādhyāya*. The guru has to do with the divine sphere and with man's ultimate realization of the Real. He is believed to be in close communion with supernatural powers and to hold the secret of divine mysteries on account of asceticism, inspiration or saintliness of life. He is, to the Hindu masses, "the man who can swim and so is able to pull a drowning man out of the water"⁷. Strictly speaking, only a *Jīvañmukta* or a man who has attained liberation and realization while still living in the body and on this earth, may be called a guru. The divine character of the guru has always been a Hindu tenet.

2. In the *Upaniṣads*

The *Upaniṣads* repeatedly disapprove of study by oneself as futile. Satyakāma, after having been instructed by fire, bull, swan and diver-bird (that is, by his own observations), comes to his guru who marvels at his knowledge, and asks him who had taught him all this. The reply was, "Others than man. But do you yourself now speak to me. For I have heard from men like you, Sir, that what helps one best to attain one's end is knowledge gained from a guru"⁸.

The *Upaniṣads* represent a guru as indispensable for the acquisition of supreme knowledge. "Let him for the sake of this knowledge approach a guru who has learned in the scriptures and is established in Brahman". Even the god Indra had to become a disciple or *śiṣya* of Prajāpati in order to obtain perfect instruction. Without instruction brāhmans are such by birth only and not in truth. One may possess knowledge, but it is only the guru who can show the way⁹. "It is to him who has equally great

7. Gonda J., in *The Change and Continuity in Indian Tradition*, (Moulton and Co., The Hague 1965) p. 268.

8. *Candogya Upaniṣad* 4. 9.

9. *Katha Up.* 2. 8; *Mundaka Up.* 1. 2. 12, *Candogya Up.* 8.7.2; 6. 1. 1; 4. 14. 1.

devotion to God and to his guru that the doctrines exposed in the sacred books will become luminous”¹⁰. We note once again how closely God and the guru are associated in Indian religious thought.

3. In the Saiva Siddhanta

The Siddhānta scriptures expressly teach that God manifests himself as the guru. The *Siva-Jñāna-Bodham* (awakening of Siva-knowledge) of Meykanṭa-Deva, which summarises the entire Siddhānta religion, says: “Siva who has been guiding the soul through the *kevala* state of original ignorance and complete darkness and the *sakala* state of *samsāra* or earthly sojourn, now manifests himself to it as a human guru” in order to offer to it the grace of *Jñāna*¹¹. The *Siva-Jñāna-Siddhi* (attainment of Siva-knowledge), a commentary on the *Bodham* by Arulnandi, illustrates the same truth by means of parables¹². All the fourteen *Meykanṭa-śastras* are emphatic on Siva’s self-manifestation as the Guru. As an example of the uniform teaching of Siddhānta doctors on this point, we may quote the clear teaching of Tirumular in his, *Tirumantiram* (sacred utterance): “He who is above all worlds, the holy Siva, is in this world the praise-worthy holy Guru... God himself is the Siva-guru.”¹³ “The doctrine of Guru in Siddhānta is not a metaphysical speculation but a truth made valid in the experience of saints. This is a mystic experience and cannot be rationally explained. We have to accept the testimony of a saint like Mānickavācagar.”¹⁴ It is, however, not an esoteric doctrine, mystified as in Tantrism, but a creed of faith and experience for every Siddhāntin.

From the above sketchy data on the guru in Hindu tradition, three points become clear: first, the absolute need of the guru in the process of attaining liberation; secondly, the divine character of the guru, so that “only that knowledge which issues from the lips of the guru is alive;” thirdly, the fact that

10. *Svetāśvatara Up.* 6. 23.

11. Meykanta-Deva, *Siva-jñāna-bodham*, sutra 8.

12. Arulnandi, *Siva-jñāna-siddhi*, 11. 8. 1.

13. Tirumala Nayanar, *Tirumantiram*, 1573 and 1576.

14. Gonda J. loc. cit.

Siva himself is the Guru who instructs through all the earthly gurus.

B. Theology of the Guru

One can proceed in many different ways to build a theology of the guru. The divine character of the guru can be studied and its implications, including its incarnational dimensions, examined. This would be a speculative and dogmatic approach. Or one could compare and contrast the guru title with such biblical titles of Christ as Rabbi, Rabboni, Master, Prophet, etc. This would imply a thorough analysis of both the traditions, which cannot be attempted here. We intend to pursue a simpler way, and offer certain observations born of Christian reflection on the Hindu theology of the guru.

It is possible to ask if a concept like guru, which belongs to an old culture and unsophisticated *āśram* life, has any relevance for modern specialized existence. Such questions, instead of discouraging us, should stimulate us to a deeper search into the perennial value of the guru tradition, and should make us try to get to the core of this ancient ideal.

I. A Relationship

First and foremost, the guru-theology is based on the rational character of the guru. For one could not simply think of a guru in isolation. A guru is a guru because a śiṣya sits at his feet. The living link between these two is what is most fundamental in the guru-idea. In the absence of this relationship, a wandering Sadhu, a Sannyāsi of great renunciation, or a Ṛṣi in contemplation in his forest retreat, cannot be considered a guru.

A guru is not a mother feeding her child, nor a master ordering his servant, nor a normal man leading a blind man. The relation between guru and śiṣya is rather like that of light and the eye, or call and the response. The guru belongs inwardly to the process of spiritual realization as light to the act of seeing. What the guru does is technically called initiation. Theologically the guru-śiṣya relation could be seen as a "representation" of the divine-human bond of the Revelation that

summons and the Faith that responds. It could even be looked upon as a "sacrament" of the dialogue between God and man in the history of Salvation. The heavy insistence on the need of the guru for liberation is based on the truth that no one can realize salvation all by himself. The saving response is awakened only by the saving word which comes from another. The guru represents the divine word that comes gratuitously. The saying of Rāmaṇa Mahārṣi, "If you go on working with the light available, you will meet your guru as he himself will be seeking you," indicates the Hindu conviction that the guru is a symbol and sign of the divine initiative of revelation.

Christ is the Word of God as well as the Revealer of this Word. "No one has seen God, it is only the Son, who is nearest to the Father, and those to whom the Son reveals him." And "I have made you known to the men you gave me." "And this is eternal life: for men to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent."¹⁵ Christ initiates us into the mystery of God and belongs at the same time inwardly to the mystery and to the knowledge in which eternal life consists: The Gospels thus make our attempt to view Christ as the Guru, abundantly significant.

Additional light comes from the fact that Christ is not only the revealer but also the recipient of revelation.¹⁶ That Jesus was the recipient of God's revelation and fulfilled the vocation of the man of faith is as important as the affirmation that God was in Christ revealing himself to men. The very meaning of the Incarnation lies in this intercourse of the divine and the human. Uniting these two in his person, Christ lived the mystery of revelation and of faith. He is the Man who has immediate and direct experience of God, and hence the uniqueness of his revelation makes him the unique Guru. Christ is thus the sacrament of every Guru-śiṣya dialogue.

15. Jn. 1.1, 14, 18; 17. 3,6,27; 14. 9b; Mat. 11.27; Heb. 1.1.

16. Rev. 1.1; Jn. 5. 30; 7. 16-18.

2. A Mediation

There is in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* a detailed description of *Upanayana* or the thread ceremony of the "twice born", which makes it still clearer that the guru is much more than an external agent or moral stimulus in the process of the disciple's self-realization. It is said that the guru makes the disciple his embryo and gives him a new birth. "That birth," says Manu, "which a guru...procures for him through Savitṛ, is real and exempt from old age and death." Hence Sankarācārya sang, "I bow to my most adorable guru who saved me from the great ocean of births and deaths filled with ignorance."¹⁷ The guru is seen here as mediator of a new existence for man in the realm of immortality. He becomes not only revealer but diviniser.

This perspective could offer us new insight into the humanity of Christ as the medium of our divinisation and adoption as sons of God. By his resurrection Jesus has been constituted the New Adam and the Lord who is Spirit. And Spirit gives birth to spirit. So "to all who believed in him he gave the right to become God's children."¹⁸ Thus Jesus seen as Guru both mediates and reveals our divine sonship.

3. Personal, open to the inter-personal

It might be asked if the Saivite guru by his private initiation offers anything more than individual liberation so characteristic of the Hindu idea of salvation. Is there not a basic difference between the guru's divinising function and Christ's mediation which builds up universal brotherhood and ecclesial fellowship? The answer must begin by insisting that genuine guru-śiṣya relationship consists not so much in secret communication or sectarian allegiance as in a strictly personal and vital relationship. Experience is best communicated through the intimacy of contact. The communication of spiritual experience by the guru to the śiṣya pertains to the realm of the mystery of the spirit and of spiritual contact. Thereby the guru, who is a

17. *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11. 3. 3; *Manusmṛti* 2. 148; Gonda J, op. cit. p. 295.

18. Jn 3. 6; 1. 12.

Jīvañmukta, initiates the disciple into the experience of the divine through the various *dīkṣas* or disciplines. Thus the disciples of a guru become sharers in a single experience. And since according to Saiva Siddhanta all gurus are manifestations of Śiva, there is among all the śiṣyas a basic community of experience.

4. Fellowship is the fruit of discipleship

The implications here of personal relations between the *guru* and the *śiṣya* link up with the personal character of Christian revelation, and particularly with Christ's intimate self-communication to the apostles, which gave rise to the ecclesial community. The apostles had the privilege of a direct experience of the man who was the Son of God. As John puts it, "We have heard it and we have seen it with our eyes, and our hands have touched it. When this life became visible, we saw it. So we speak of it and tell you."¹⁹ It is in this experience that the life of the Church is grounded. The apostles, in proclaiming the Word, could not pass it on simply by speaking. Since the Word is a person, and no person can be adequately expressed by words, their witness had to be the communication of a Presence and the relationship with a Person. All Christians were to participate personally in the experience of Christ in the Spirit, and in the experience of the apostles.

We could then say that the *guru-śiṣya* bond symbolises the intimate and immediate relation between Christ and the faithful. It means that the individual Christian receives revelation not only from men and books, but from Christ himself through his indwelling Spirit. While the part played by the Scriptures, the magisterium and by fellow believers is not forgotten, the *guru-śiṣya* bond emphasises the need for personal experience of the revelation. For revelation is not something which can simply be delivered to men by other men. It is God that reveals. "There is no revelation unless God is now acting and unless a human consciousness is now responding. Revelation is a personal union in knowledge between God and a participating subject in the revelational history of a community."²⁰

19. I Jn 1. 1-4.

20. Moran G, *Theology of Revelation*, p. 93.

It seems to us, then, that the relevance of approaching Christ as the Guru is great for our times when men are searching for personal religion, religious experience, and authentic guidance in life. The pastoral significance of the guru-śiṣya relationship in religious education and formation is equally great. The guru idea implies the function of divine and unique revelational presence, personally experienced and personally communicated. It describes Jesus the Christ in dogmatic as well as mystical (cregal and pastoral) aspects of his person and mission. He is the Guru for ever, and the Church is his śiṣya for all times.

Paris

X. Irudayaraj

The Christian and Creativity

Every Christian needs to be an artist: not in the sense of someone who produces works of art like paintings, sculptures, music etc., but in the sense of someone who is capable of aesthetic experience and artistic vision: someone who can perceive 'beauty' in the world surrounding him, appreciate order and proportion, contemplate the 'splendour of form'; create order out of chaos, impose form on matter; someone who can react to the world with his whole being: soul and body, the mind and the senses, intelligence as well as emotions. Only an artistic vision can grasp the world and history as symbols and see in them God's self-expression. This self-revelation of God reaches its perfection in Jesus Christ and only a total regard, characteristic of art, can come to grips with this astonishing reality. The liturgy too, through which the presence of Christ is continued, is symbolic, and its understanding and appreciation call for an artist's approach.

The Indian Tradition

For an Indian Christian, being an artist is only being faithful to an old Indian tradition, and enriching and transforming it in the process. Art has always played a great role in Indian life.¹ One look at the temples, sculptures and the living traditions of dance and music is enough to show us not only that Indians loved life and loved to portray it, but also that art, life and religion formed one harmonious whole. Art

(1) We have space here only for a few summary indications. The interested reader is referred to the masterly works of A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Shiva*; 'The part of Art in Indian Life' in *The Cultural Heritage of India* (Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta) vol. III, 485-513; *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927). Pp 8-9; and *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* (New York, 1956). Also Mulk Raj Anand, *The Hindu View of Art*, pp 37-47.

was esteemed so highly that aesthetic experience itself was considered a means of realisation or experience of the Self. Some even thought them identical, while others thought them only analogous.² The fact that the *Advaita Vedanta* has rather been in the limelight in recent years should not lead us to forget other aspects of Indian cultural and religious tradition. In the *Bhakti* traditions image and song, dance and music have always had an important role to play. The whole man was involved in religion, and life itself became a *sādhana*, a sacrament of Salvation. The *Bhakti* view of art gives us a clue to the *Bhakti* view of life and religion. While *Jñāna mārga* might have a tendency to gnosticism and *Karma mārga* might lean towards moralism, the *Bhakti mārga* humanised them both in the living dynamic of love which sees the whole world as a theophany.

If the role of artistic vision in religion and life is largely ignored today it is because art itself is considered something marginal and superfluous, reserved to a few specialists. Art has come to be identified with a certain class of objects. In fact art is so central to life that one might say that there is nothing that is artistically neutral: things are only more or less artistic.³ For a better appreciation, therefore, of the role of art in religious and Christian life, we should give a moment's thought to what art is.

Truth, Goodness and Beauty

It is a commonplace in philosophy to say that Being, Truth and Goodness coalesce into Beauty. When Beauty does not spring forth and become visible almost spontaneously, so to speak, from a conjunction of the other three, it is certainly because one of them is being over-emphasized or over-perceived, and lack of proportion leads directly to absence of beauty. One-sided insistence on Goodness is sure to lead to 'moralism'.

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- (2) See M. Hiriyanna, *Art Experience*, pp 16; 25-27; and A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Dance of Shiva*, pp 41-59.
- (3) What is not artistic is ugly. Ugliness is the absence of beauty. Cf. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Part of Art in Indian Life*, C. H. I, III, 486-487.

Where orthopraxis, or right behaviour, is emphasized at the expense of orthodoxy, or truthful thinking, and action is preferred to contemplation, religion tends to become magic; conformism becomes more important than creativity. On the other hand, where Truth is preferred to Goodness the way is open to 'agnosticism': orthodoxy tilts the balance against orthopraxis, contemplation seeks to displace action, visions pass for creation, and religion degenerates into speculation. But beauty harmonizes Truth and Goodness. It provokes and encourages creation. It seeks to infuse a vision into action and to make contemplation active. The result is that religion finds its most complete expression in the liturgy which is symbolic action,⁴ and the activity of contemplation.

In a world without Beauty, Truth and Goodness lose their *raison d'être*.⁵ Goodness considered alone without Beauty loses its force of attraction. It may still appear as something that ought to be done or to be pursued; but it is no longer enticing, attractive or compelling. "Beauty," says Ananda Coomaraswamy, "is the attractive power of perfection."⁶ A perfection that is not at the same time perceived as attractive is not really perceived as a perfection. It does not conclusively and convincingly exclude its alternative.⁷ Morality can still be felt as obligatory

(4) In the words of the Second Vatican Council: "Liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fount from which all her power flows." (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 10). See also no. 2 of the same Constitution. The liturgy is the actualisation of the Church itself which is Sacrament.

(5) Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *La Gloire et la Croix* (Paris 1964), vol. i, pp 17-18. This whole paragraph owes much to the introduction of this book.

(6) Cf. A. K. Coomaraswamy, *Christian and Oriental...*, p. 28.

(7) Attraction can be physical, sensuous, intellectual or even spiritual. Goodness that is not attractive at any of these levels may still be perceived as binding, but has no power to exclude its alternative conclusively. Attraction is not a purely objective quality. It depends to a large extent on the disposition of the one who perceives it and the quality of his perception.

not because of the intrinsic worth of the 'Good' but only because of an external force or law. Where this latter is no longer effective a tendency to experiment manifests itself. One begins to play with the forbidden fruit. Experience seems to become more important than the thing experienced.⁸ On the other hand, Truth without Beauty becomes aimless speculation. Conclusions no longer have the force to persuade and to lead to decision. Skepticism becomes fashionable. For Truth without proportion becomes a half-truth. In these conditions the search for the Truth becomes an intellectual game. Much of theology is based on arguments of convenience, on a sense of proportion, on the 'analogy of Faith'. With a decline in the sense of proportion these conclusions become shaky.⁹

Spirit and Matter

The tension between matter and spirit is as interesting as the one between Goodness and Truth. While the materialist denies the spirit and every one of its manifestations, or seeks to reduce it to an epiphenomenon or surface-appearance of matter, the better to ignore it, the spiritualist mistrusts matter. When he cannot deny its reality and look upon it as illusion, he would consider it as secondary and unimportant - to be despised and shunned, or to be grudgingly tolerated as a necessary evil. The former is the temptation of Science, and the latter, of Philosophy. The vision of the artist transcends this dualism and perceives spirit in matter and matter as the embodiment of spirit. Man himself is recognized as the highest realisation and manifestation of this integration.

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- (8) There is already a subtle transposition here. When Goodness is not perceived as worthwhile, it is 'beauty' that is pursued without any regard to its moral character. Such beauty is not real beauty either. We are not speculating here in the abstract, but trying to understand some modern tendencies in morality and aesthetics, which seem often to go hand in hand.
 - (9) This is the short-coming of extreme rationalism. Half-truths and limited certitudes are not dangerous so long as they are affirmed as such.

Artistic Creation

The artist creates by discovering the form hidden in matter's potentiality for an infinite variety of forms, and manifests it and proposes it for the admiration of the whole world.¹⁰ In his eyes there is nothing that is purely material. Matter for him is its potentiality for form - that is, the material with which to create, to shape, to express. And matter itself sees its value enhanced when it gives itself up to the creative imagination of the artist. What would just be a conglomerate of disparate sounds takes form and structure in the hands of the composer and is transformed into enchanting melody. The melody is not something entirely different from the sounds. Its being is the being of the sounds strung together in a melodic curve. And yet where would the melody be without the composer who has imposed the melodic form that structures the sounds? This form is the imprint of his creative vision on the material offered by the sounds. As structured by form each particular sound is transformed. Its value is enhanced beyond measure as it shares in the beauty of the melody.

The creative activity of the artist consists precisely in making the form manifest in the matter. His mind is not a storehouse of disincarnate forms which he later transcribes into words, sounds, colour or stone. The forms do not exist independently of the matter, which they shape and structure into an ordered proportion. They are not like the Platonic ideas leading a shadowy existence of their own. On the contrary, they are the outcome of the confrontation between the creative imagination of the artist and the material, whether it be word, sound, colour,

(10). The words 'matter' and 'form' are to be taken in a general sense and not in the technical sense that is given to them by Scholastic Philosophy. The words 'discovery' and 'hidden' should not be interpreted too literally. There is no implication at all that the form is there in the material, in some mysterious manner, and is just 'unveiled' by the artist. We are trying to describe a phenomenon difficult to describe. We have tried to balance this statement by using the words 'impose' and 'imprint' later in the paragraph. See also the following paragraph.

stone or space.¹¹ The artist wrestles with his material, with his vision, so that it may inspire him and with the technique which he has mastered so that it may help him, and out of this effort is born the work of art. The artist himself may not be wholly aware of what is going to come out of it all.¹² His wonder and his joy at the sight of his finished work is as great as that of the spectator. He might employ accepted conventions as to forms and techniques; but it is his vision that transmutes them into gold.

Appreciating Art

When the connoisseur looks at a work of art he perceives its beauty only in so far as he can, in a way, recreate the experience of the artist. Even when the special idiom of an époque or of an individual artist is quite familiar to the observer, the task of re-creating, or re-living, the experience of the artist, remains. This task is not one of pure imagination; it has for its object the work of art and only the work of art. The commentaries of critics and the confessions of the artist may point out the way and provide the background; but they cannot be a substitute for the work of re-creation that has to be achieved directly on the object itself. The artistic objects thus become a symbol which presents a puzzle and at the same time offers the only key which can solve it. It is a puzzle because it is not itself the signification but only an expression of it in a given medium, and therefore it needs to be interpreted. It is the key because it is the only way to get at the signification the artist has actually succeeded in expressing, whatever his stated intentions might be.

(11) William F. Lynch, S. J. demonstrates convincingly the significance for art and for life of the finite and definite realities of man and the world in his book *Christ and Apollo*, 'The Dimensions of the Literary Imagination' (New York, 1960). The title itself where Christ stands for the definite and Apollo for the dream world, shows the Christological overtones of his thesis.

(12) See André Bouler, "Monologue d'un Peintre", *Christus* 67 (1970), 294-308.

Revelation as a Work of Art

We started with the statement that every Christian needs to be an artist. It is our contention that a Christian cannot understand God's self revelation in nature and in history if he does not have the type of approach which we have described as artistic or aesthetic.

In the first place, the whole of creation speaks of God as a work of art speaks, though mutely, about artist. But the message can be heard only on two conditions. On the one hand, we should look beyond the materiality of the world - the level of the Physical Sciences - to the meaning that can be read *in* them. On the other hand, one should take this expression of spirit in matter seriously and try to interpret it, instead of rejecting it as illusory, of making it conform to conceptual models of one's own fashioning. Only under this double condition can the world become a symbol - that is to say, neither a mere object nor a simple sign.¹³

When God chose to reveal himself in a more particular way, he did so through historical events. His message can be grasped only by those who take these historical events seriously as real and historical and at the same time know how to look beyond them at God who acts and manifests himself in and through them. Faith aids us, but it is no substitute for hermeneutics, which offers faith its foundation and provides it with its substance. And hermeneutics is neither logical deduction nor scientific verification but interpretation of symbol based on analogy, proportion, convenience, similarity - that is to say, an aesthetic approach to reality.

Beauty Incarnate

The self revelation of God reaches its perfection in Christ who is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1, 15). "He is the

(13) A sign is arbitrary as opposed to a symbol which is motivated. There is no motive to call an animal 'horse' in English, 'cheval' in French and 'Pferd' in German. These are signs. But fire is the symbol of love because they have a common aspect, 'ardour', which motivates the use of the symbol.

radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature" (Heb 1, 3). God becomes visible to us in him. To see him is to see the Father (cf. Jn 14, 9). This image appears in the splendour and the "glory that is his as the only Son of the Father" (Jn 1, 14), a glory that was seen for a moment on the mount of the Transfiguration (cf. Lk 9, 32), that shone in all its brightness at the day of his resurrection (Jn 17, 5) and which will be finally revealed at his second coming (cf. Lk 9, 26).¹⁴ When the Scriptures speak of glory they mean something that is perceptible, visible: brilliance, splendour, beauty. Christ is the highest and the definitive form of God's self-expression. Neither mere rational thought nor scientific method can grasp this reality. A total approach involving the whole person and all his faculties, characteristic of aesthetics, is necessary. It is not enough to understand Christ: we must contemplate him. And it is not enough even to contemplate Christ; we must feel him and participate in his life, not physically but through symbol. Only then can we say that we have received the Word. It is indeed a mystery of presence, but presence in a body, the most sublime example of spirit in matter: and the temptation is always there to evacuate either the one or the other.

The Liturgy

The presence of Christ continues in the Church, especially in the liturgy and in a particular way in the Eucharist. Liturgy is symbolic action. God's saving action in Christ becomes present there in symbol in the action of the worshipping brotherhood. A communal meal is a symbol of fraternal union in any human group. But taken as a memorial of Christ it becomes at the same time a symbol of communion among the participants and between them and God, through Christ who is present in their midst.¹⁵ Modern man's difficulties with the symbolic action that is the liturgy comes from two sources: either he sees in it only a rite whose signification escapes him; or he intellectualises it. In the first case it becomes magic, if there is a blind belief in its

(14) A more detailed study of the themes of Image and Glory in the Bible would be of great interest in this connection. The theme of Image was very popular among the Greek Fathers of the Church.

(15) The different modalities of Christ's presence are described in no. 7 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

efficaciousness, or a group phenomenon to be explained through socio-psychological factors. In the second case, the symbol is turned into allegory and by that very act it is shorn of the sensible element. What ought to have been a life-situation charged with symbolic power becomes a mere drama. In either case a total view is lacking.

A New World

If Christ has come into the world as the true image of God this is only in view of a new creation (2 Cor 5, 17). He came to re-make us in his own image as God's sons and to give us a share in his glory (Rom 8, 29-30). The whole universe is to share in this re-creation (Eph 1, 10; Col 1, 20). In this work we are collaborators. It is a double process: double, but mutually related, one involving the other: a process of incarnation and of transfiguration. The aspect of incarnation consists in making Christ present *to* this world, and *in* this world, and among men, in every cultural and religious group. Thus we must create an Indian Christian culture, Indian Christian art, and an Indian Christian spirituality. Through this act of creation the whole of reality is transformed and transfigured by the interior presence of the Spirit, and the glory of God shines in it and through it.¹⁶ It becomes transparent to the divine splendour that divinises it. It is the mystery of the resurrection the new creation. To be a Christian is to actualise continuously this creative process in oneself, in the community and in the world.

The Problem of a Christian Art

We have said that every Christian needs an artistic vision. We have not affirmed that every Christian *is* an artist, much less, that every artist is a Christian. Neither of these affirmations would be true. The term artist is normally used to designate someone who produces works of art. Such production requires mastery of a technique besides artistic vision. Not every Christian has such mastery, and quite a few probably lack the vision too. Now, an artist who is a Christian need not necessarily be, at least

(16) See Jean-Marie Teze, "La Gloire du Sensible", *Christus* 67 (1970), 380-391, for a development of the themes of Incarnation, Transfiguration and Resurrection with reference to art.

not all the time, a Christian artist. There are different ways of being Christian, more or less deeply committed, and different ways of relating to art. For art, like culture and every thing human, has a certain legitimate autonomy. We can therefore think, in the abstract, of three possibilities: an artist can genuinely be creative and yet deliberately choose not to let any value beyond the finite influence him; or he may remain open in his creation to the Infinite, – to the Spirit – without actively searching for its influence; or finally, his creative activity can consciously participate in the recreative activity of Christ in the Spirit. Only in this last case may we speak of an art that is explicitly Christian. The second is already open to it.¹⁷ In practice however the distinctions are not so neat. Each work of art has to be considered and judged individually. The deciding criteria will have to be interior to the work of art and to aesthetics.

Creativity

What we have been saying about art can be said in general about any creative action. If one does not take the Incarnation seriously, one adopts an acosmic attitude to life and reality. One is not interested in the present, and mistrusts 'adaptation', which is only another name for continued re-creation within the new creation. One is satisfied then either with repeating old forms or with giving them a new garb without really taking the trouble to re-create. But it is possible on the other hand, to take the present seriously and be actively engaged in creation and yet fail to serve the new creation. The reason is that the activity is not animated by the Spirit. Faith, if not totally absent, remains marginal to the creative effort. In either case there is a separation in fact between faith and life. Only those who are deeply imbued with the Spirit of Christ and who seek to give contemporary expression to it can really create something that is Christian, actual and living, whether it is art, literature, theology or spirituality.

(17) A variety of opinions is possible in this question. We are exposing here our own point of view. For longer discussions see Paul Evdokimov, *L'Art de l'Icône. Théologie de la Beauté* (Paris, DDB, 1970) pp 20-70 and also P. R. Régamey, *Art Sacré au XXe Siècle?* (Paris, Cerf, 1952) pp 77-78. Also "Y a-t-il encore un Art Sacré?", *Christus* 67 (1970), 350-361.

The Indian Church

If we - the Indian Church - have not been very creative, it is because we, except for a few enlightened individuals, have not taken this task of re creation very seriously. We cannot really speak of an Indian Church till the Christian community as a whole tries actively to express the "newness" it has received from Christ in every aspect of its life: religious, social, artistic, cultural. Here we shall limit ourselves to a few remarks on the artistic aspect. Recent years have seen a serious attempt to introduce Indian music in the liturgy. Despite the brave efforts of pioneers, Indian Christian painting benefits only a circle of the initiated. Efforts towards an Indian Christian architecture have been few. We must not, however, seem to identify Christian art with liturgical art. We should not be satisfied with expressing Christian and Biblical themes in dances. This is already a great step, of course, but it is the life of the Christian, and all of it, that must find expression in art. Christian life is not confined within the four walls of a church-building. A Christian's literature is not confined to the Bible and the lives of the saints. Here is a challenge to the Indian Church and unless she makes a creative and continuing effort to meet it she is not true to her being. For to be a Christian is to be creative: to seek constantly to bring Christ to birth anew in every culture and thus to transform it in the power of the resurrection which has started the process of a new creation.

The Indian sages saw the world as a theophany. In the Incarnation theophany ceases to be a mere symbol and becomes a living reality. A symbol turns into a manifestation. Art is changed into life. For God has now become man, one of us; but he has transformed what he has assumed. All reality is to share in this transformation and become a new heaven and a new earth. The principle of this new creation, like that of the old, is, of course, the Spirit. But his work is also our task, a task ceaselessly renewed from age to age, for perfection is eschatological.

Paris
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BULLETIN 1

The Dutch Catechism

In attempting to apply the renewal of Church-life initiated by the Council, the Church in Western Europe has many times experienced the opposition of the central Roman government to the search for plurality. On various occasions, both doctrinal and pastoral conflicts have occurred. Names such as Schillebeeckx, Suenens and Küng immediately call these events to mind. The discussions concerning the Dutch Catechism, particularly from 1967 till 1969, seem to be typical of the tensions that arise when an attempt is made to give an adapted and renewed expression of the one, universal message.

It may be useful, now that these discussions are quieting down, to sketch the origin and the evolution of this part of contemporary church history. We shall do this on the basis of the *Witboek over de Nieuw Katechismus* (White Paper on the New Catechism, (Utrecht, 1969), which was composed, at the request of the Higher Catechetical Institute of Nijmegen, by W. Bless S. J., one of the co-authors of the Catechism. "The purpose of this White Paper is to provide, for everybody who wants to be informed, an account of the facts as they occurred. A great deal of attention has been given by the press to our difficulties with Rome. At the same time, we were not free to speak openly, as that could have made our discussions with Rome more difficult. It is, however, now possible to do so... The search for an up-to-date presentation of the Faith urgently demands open dialogue. This also is emphasized in the 'Witboek' (Foreword). A great many publications concerning this topic have appeared, especially in Holland, Germany and France. In this survey, we make no attempt to enumerate them exhaustively. We wish to direct our attention rather to the way in which the conflict with Rome first arose and then later escalated, as this emerges clearly from the documents which were exchanged and which are included in the 'Witboek'.

The Project

In 1961 the Dutch hierarchy commissioned the Higher Catechetical Institute of Nijmegen (Hoger Katechetisch Instituut te Nijmegen) to produce a new catechism, meant for adults rather than for children. A first draft of more than 200 pages was presented to 120 people. They were requested to study it and bring forward, in a spirit of openness and honesty, their criticisms and proposals for its improvement. In this way, a collection of thousands of observations came into being: these observations came not only from Biblical scholars and theologians, but from parents, from the parish clergy, and from people in all sorts of professions and endowed with expertise in various spheres of life - in short, people who represented the complete spectrum of Church life.

On the basis of these observations, a group of editors worked on a revision of the book. Then, on 4 October, 1966, Card. Alfrink presented it during a press conference; he did so in the name of the Dutch bishops: "When one asks what authority should be accorded the New Catechism in the Dutch Church, no simple answer can be given. The title page indicates that this book 'was commissioned by the hierarchy of the Netherlands'. The bishops have accepted it, and they recommend it, in fulfilment of their mission and their function in the Church, to all who wish to hear the voice of the Church today. This catechism cannot then be considered a text which one is quite free to accept or reject. This does not however in any way mean that everything in this book has the character of an infallible gospel. The usual distinctions which have to be brought into play as soon as one begins to talk about matters of faith apply here also... The bishops do however accord this book this degree of authority; they consider that they hereby offer the believing community a safe guide. On the one hand, it is written in the language of to-day and uses contemporary ways of approaching the material, while it remains, on the other hand, faithful to the essential lines of the precious heritage of revelation, which we must preach again anew in every age in the Spirit of our Lord."

At the same press conference the authors from the Higher Institute of Catechetics described the major *theological charac-*

teristics of the New Catechism as follows: "This New Catechism attempts to bring each and every believer to reflect on his faith. Many different aspects of each of the mysteries are brought to the fore. What is unsure is not presented as certain. In such cases, everyone can follow the reasoning which leads to the adoption of a position. The approach is always one of thought-in-development: nowhere can you find the last word, for this 'last word' simply doesn't exist. It doesn't exist now - and we can't expect that it will be available in future. For it will always be possible to reflect further on the mysteries of faith. Of necessity the catechism speaks in a monologue; but it does so in a way that invites to dialogue, to a discussion about the great questions that concern human living... The catechism very definitely takes tradition as its starting point. Indeed, it could hardly do otherwise and give a true picture. But at the same time, it does not insist on seeing tradition as a series of once-for-all, unchangeably well-formulated expressions. The development within theology is not bypassed. Still it is anything but a theological treatise. The best that theology contains, and its new insights have been taken up and applied to our current situation."

Concerning *what is new* in the content of the catechism, the authors had this to say: "The faith is not presented as a system of truths, as was true of earlier catechisms: first, the truths about God, then about man, the Church, the sacraments, morality. The new catechism begins with man searching for God. It ends with God who is seeking man. It takes human living as a starting-point and indicates how the God-question arises therein. Then follows a sketch of the attempts that have been made to answer this question from the earliest religions down to Humanism and Communism. After that, the manner in which God sought man in the history of Israel is unfolded. A summary treatment of the Old Testament leads us to the central point of the catechism: the preaching of Jesus, who is the Christ. Here then the basic theme of this book is centrally placed: and that is, that we meet God in a real and true way only if we recognize Him in the Son of Man. Only through Christ can we speak about God and live through Him. This catechism expresses the belief that in Christ all the great religions and world-views meet and find their completion.

"Thus the book shows how the Church unfolds out of Christ in History, and again and again places new tasks before Christians. The Kingdom of God becomes visible little by little century after century, in the course of history, and even now is present among us as a gift and a task. Here too we find the typical function of Christians in the world of today. After this, the question of the completion of all things, to which we look forward in hope, is taken up. The book closes with a chapter about the ineffable God, whom we see in Christ and in His Church, and who wishes to be near us in our daily existence.

"It is thus obvious that by means of this plan the whole book is dominated by the Bible. In it we find the Bible read through *our* eyes, the eyes of *our* times; with the eyes of someone to whom the Bible speaks *today* and who meets there the God of his life."

First Difficulties

On 22 November 1966 there appeared in the Dutch press report that a group of clerics and laity wished to send a petition to the Pope. They felt that the New Catechism departed from the one true teaching of the Church on seven points: the Virginity of Mary, Original Sin, the Eucharist, Birth control, the creation of the human soul, the existence of angels, kinship with Protestant teaching.

Afterwards there appeared regularly in the press, both in Holland and elsewhere, reports about difficulties that had arisen concerning the Dutch Catechism. In February 1967, a secret commission of experts set up by the Pope produced a report. As a consequence, it was suggested to the Dutch hierarchy that a number of passages should be rewritten.

From 8 to 10 April 1967, the first meeting took place between representatives of Rome and of the Dutch hierarchy at Gazzada in Italy. Taking part in it on behalf of the Holy See were E. Dhanis, S. J., B. Lemeer, O. P. and J. Visser, C. SS. R; and the Dutch hierarchy were represented by E. Schillebeeckx, O. P., P. Schoonenberg, S. J. and W. Bless, S. J. The agenda was laid down by Rome. The Roman position clearly emerged

at once in the introductory observations. "The merits of the book are indisputable. This is not what is of concern here. The meeting has as its purpose the preparation of certain corrections in the line of doctrine, with a view to a new edition and the numerous translations which will certainly follow." Only after this is a reference made to a dialogue: "It is desirable that the discussions should develop in an atmosphere of great sincerity and brotherliness."

The Roman theologians had found 14 important and 45 less important difficulties in the Catechism. At this meeting the letter that had been sent by the Pope to Card. Alfrink on 30 March 1967 in relation to this meeting was handed over to the Dutch experts. In this letter the following is to be found: "We are certain that this mutual consultation shall of itself lead to that which the delegates, carrying out the commission entrusted to them, shall ask freely of the experts from your country, i.e. that certain things shall be introduced into the Catechism so that in better balanced wording, it may correspond as closely as possible to the belief of the Church, to the truth, and to the convictions of the faithful. Far be it from us to wish to restrict the course of discussions beforehand, as they must of course remain open and human. Nevertheless, we are convinced that no possibility of misunderstanding may be allowed to exist in what concerns e.g. the virginal birth of Jesus Christ, which is a dogma of Catholic faith; the conviction, based on the Gospel and Church tradition, by which we believe that angels exist; and the nature of the satisfaction and sacrifice which Christ offered to his heavenly Father to make up for our sins and to reconcile mankind with the Father."

From the report from the meeting at Gazzada it appears that the two delegations did not reach agreement on any point whatsoever. "The theologians of both delegations regret, that at the close of their talks on the New Catechism, the open and frank discussions which they held almost never led to an agreement of the points that were investigated. They were one in heart, but generally of divided opinions." In the final report, the positions of the two delegations on the twelve important disputed points are set down side by side. The unmistakable impression emerges that the difference lay primarily on the level

of formulation. The Dutch representatives argued as follows: "It is very often necessary to distinguish between what is fundamental to the faith which is presented by the teaching authority, and the formulation of it: the formulation is grounded in the currently dominant view of man and of the world. Since this is so, a catechism must not harm, through the use of new means of expression, that which is fundamental to the faith; and, on the other hand it must avoid the danger that, through the repetition of old formulae, the selfsame faith is not allowed to shine forth in these new circumstances of time and thought." The Roman theologians, taking precisely the opposite position, held back from this approach, and leaned yet again towards the use of the tried and trusted traditional formulations. Professor Schillebeeckx observed: "In all sorts of ways, one can find fault with the New Catechism but this is every bit as true of the documents of Vatican II. It is desirable that nothing should be changed, or summarized in a fine conceptual formulation, in a book that has been presented by the hierarchy as 'a safe guide', simply because of the furore that has arisen around it, unless this appears truly necessary for reasons of faith." W. Bless put it thus: "Rome and the Dutch hierarchy believe in the same mysteries. It is a matter of *how* the mysteries should be interpreted."

After the discussions at Gazzada had failed to lead to agreement, a commission of cardinals was appointed in July 1967 in Rome. The members were: Cardinals Frings, Lefébvre, Jaeger, Florit, Browne and Journet.

The Dutch hierarchy itself submitted to Rome on September 6, 1967 a number of proposed alterations of the text. The proposals were mostly amplifications, and referred, among other things, to the virgin birth, the meaning of redemption through the death of Jesus, the Eucharistic presence, birth control, eternal life.

Complications with the Translations

a. The German translation

Attacks on the New Catechism were not confined to Holland; in the German language area many reactions were publicized by the press, radio and television. Already in 1967 a

book had appeared, written by V. M. Kuiper, O. P., and entitled *Mortal Sins of the Dutch Catechism (Hauptsünden des Holländischen Katechismus, Zürich, Thomas Verlag)*.

On 28 July 1967, Herder Verlag (Freiburg) announced that, for the present, no *imprimatur* could be expected for the German edition. The difficulties did not arise from the Dutch or German hierarchies, but stemmed from Rome. Mgr. Schäuffele, Archbishop of Freiburg, had received a letter from the Congregation of the Faith, in which the setting-up of a commission of cardinals was announced. The *imprimatur* could be expected only after this commission had completed its investigations.

The Herder Publishing Company decided to publish a limited edition (600 copies) on order to make the text available to the German bishops and theologians. In January 1968 Herder published a supplement to this edition, which made available to this restricted group of people who had a special interest in the book and who had been the recipients of the limited edition, proposed clarifications which the Dutch hierarchy had sent to Rome on 6 September, 1967.

In May 1968 the German translation was published for the general public under the title: *The Faith for Adults (Glaubensverkündigung für Erwachsene)*. This edition was arranged as follows: a Dutch publishing firm in Nijmegen published the book, under contract to Herder Verlag. Herder "did not wish to have such a book published in Germany without an *imprimatur*, and so chose a way which would not come in conflict either with the authority of the German bishops or with their canonical position. The publishers held it to be impossible to deny the text to the laity, for whom it was after all intended, especially as only a few points were contested. There has been no decision by the teaching authority against the book. All the theologians who have been engaged in this question have assurances that the book does not contain any heresies." (from a statement issued by Herder).

b. The English translation

In October 1967, Burns and Oates in London brought out the English translation of the Catechism: *A New Catechism:*

Catholic Faith for Adults, with the *imprimatur* of Robert E. Joyce, Bishop of Burlington, given on July 24, 1967. When the bishop heard later of the difficulties that had arisen between Holland and Rome, he withdrew his *imprimatur*, "not because he had changed his mind about the book, but because he wished to act loyally in relation to Rome." The publisher, who had already printed some thousands of copies, and thus could not reasonably halt the publication, continued with it. He was of the opinion that the diplomatic preoccupations of the bishop were of no concern to him as a publisher.

As a consequence, the following 'clarification' from Card. Alfrink appeared in the *Osservatore Romano* of 23 November 1967: "Bernard Cardinal Alfrink Archbishop of Utrecht, regrets the publication in English, of the New Catechism. He disclaims all responsibility for this publication; it took place before possible alterations of the text could be introduced; negotiations about these were still going on. The English edition indeed has the authorisation neither of the Archbishop of Utrecht, nor, insofar as can be established, of the Bishop of Burlington, who withdrew his *imprimatur*, before the publication. This English translation must therefore be regarded as having taken place without ecclesiastical approval."

On 20 November, Herder and Herder, the publishing house that had circulated the English translation in the beginning of November in New York, said, with reference to the negative comment made by the American Bishops' Conference on the New Catechism: "Herder and Herder can understand the position of the Catholic Bishops' Conference with regard to the Dutch Catechism, which has appeared in the English-speaking world under the title: *A New Catechism: Catholic Faith for Adults*. On the one hand there is the fact that this is the most celebrated short presentation of the Catholic Faith and of the Catholic experience. This praise has been accorded it by practically every important theologian as well as by some of the most respected members of the American Hierarchy. On the other hand, there is the possibility that many Catholics, because the book has been so universally praised, should come to think that it is a sort of 'official' catechism. It is, of course, nothing of the sort. It has never been presented as anything more than the authorized

translation of the catechism which the Dutch bishops support. The only official character that this translation possesses comes from the great number of official persons who have greeted its publication. This is the catechism behind which the Dutch bishops stand with their authority, and from which they have not withdrawn their approval."

c. The French Translation

On 16 July 1968 Idoc-France published the French version of the New Catechism under the title: *An Introduction to the Catholic Faith. The new Catechism for Adults prepared under the authority of the Bishops of Holland* (Une Introduction à la foi catholique-le nouveau catéchisme pour adultes réalisé sous la responsabilité des évêques des Pays-Bas. Privat, Toulouse). Besides the 654 pages of text, it contained an introductory section of 68 pages, written by Father Ch. Ehlinger, entitled: *The Central Points of Debate in the Dutch Catechism*. In this work, the history of the catechism and its difficulties are explained. The disputed points were included, as well as the alterations that had been proposed by the Dutch hierarchy in the summer of 1967; finally, the supplement contained the text of the confession of faith that Pope Paul VI had made on 30 June.

The course of events was similar to that which has been described in connexion with the German Translation. Because it was impossible to get an *imprimatur*, as a result of negotiations that were going on, the original publisher, the Editions Centurion in Paris, ceded his rights to Idoc-France, which brought out the translation without an *imprimatur*.

On July 17, the French hierarchy, through its President Cardinal Lefébvre, let its official position be known: "Even though the work is accompanied by an introductory section which attempts to explain this initiative and indicates the most important doctrinal problems that are the subject of active discussion between the Holy See and the Dutchmen whose responsibility it is, the French episcopate feels itself obliged to condemn, in the most explicit manner possible, the premature appearance of this translation of a text that needs to be revised in a thorough-going fashion in order to avoid the danger that deficiencies, ambiguities and equivocation should be a threat to the purity of the faith."

Escalation of the difficulties

In the mean time, the investigations concerning the New Catechism were continued at a high level. The commission of six cardinals met from November 12 to 14, 1967. They laid down what must be corrected in the New Catechism before new editions and translations could be allowed to appear. Four new questions were introduced besides the fourteen points which had already been discussed at the meeting in Gazzada. These were: the mystery of the Trinity, the general and ministerial priesthood, the immutability of truth and its successive verbalization, mortal and venial sins.

The cardinals decided that their conclusions should be put into effect by a commission of four theologians. As their representatives, they named E. Dhanis, S. J. and J. Visser, C. SS. R. They were to work together with two theologians designated by the Dutch hierarchy, in order to "review carefully, as editors, the text of catechism, according to the mind of the commission of cardinals" (taken from a letter from Card. Frings to P. Dhanis, 14 Dec. 1967).

The Dutch hierarchy, named G. Mulders and H. Fortmann as their representatives at the planned discussions. G. Mulders, who first accepted the appointment, later reversed his decision on grounds of principle.

The discussions between H. Fortmann, E. Dhanis and J. Visser took place in Maarsen (in the Netherlands) from the end of January to February 14, 1968. An extensive report on the textual corrections was drawn up. A new text of no less than twenty five pages was written concerning the Genesis account and Original Sin.

On 10 June 1968, an answer to this report was sent by the authors of the Dutch Catechism to the Dutch bishops. "We have come to the unanimous conclusion that the proposals as such and in their entirety ought to be rejected. Our reasons are as follows:

The book that the Dutch hierarchy has called 'a safe guide' should be considered for obligatory corrections only if other members of the college of bishops (e. g. the Pope) should point

out evident errors against faith and morals; in other words, only if the book is in conflict with the primary orthodoxy. In all the important points that have come up for correction, it has been a matter only of theological controversy about the interpretation of the faith of the Church. Thus it is, at most, a question of secondary orthodoxy.

These theological controversies have to be allowed in the current atmosphere of openness within the Church, and in such a way that people do not call each others' orthodoxy into question. We cannot oblige one another to adopt a particular theological view. As a matter of fact, the Dhanis Commission made obligatory change in areas which are of very minor importance, and which can only be considered matters of theological controversy. See, for example, the text alteration on the question of kneeling before the tabernacle. A second reason why the proposals ought to be rejected — and we are here mostly concerned about the longer passages — is that they reflect theological rather than catechetical preoccupations, and thus are in complete disharmony with the style, and the climate, in short, with the total presentation of the original book."

Discordant Climate

The discussions between Rome and the Dutch hierarchy about the acceptability of the corrections as suggested by the Fortmann-Dhanis-Visser commission had not been completed when a statement from the cardinals was published (Acts of the Apostolic See, 30 Nov. 1968). A first section, which was a review of the history of the question, describes how difficulties between Rome and the Netherlands arose, and gives an account of the discussions. In particular, the Italian work *The Dossier of the Dutch Catechism* (*Il dossier del catechismo olandese*, Milano, Mondadori, 1968) was singled out for criticism; according to the commission of Cardinals, this often present a false version of the events. In the second, or doctrinal, part of the statement ten points were presented which are deemed to require correction in catechism. In fact, nos. 9 and 10 — diverse topics taken from dogmatic theology and 'concerning certain questions in morals' — are a resumé of the objections that had previously been made.

The Dutch hierarchy replied to this statement by means of two press communiqués, on 30 November and on 10 December 1968. In the first, they say: "Concerning the essential points... the Dutch bishops had already in October 1967 proposed alterations. The commission of cardinals, however, was of opinion that they could not be accepted, for reasons which include pastoral concerns. These pastoral reasons made it necessary — in the view of the commission — to alter the catechism further, in view of its circulation in many countries other than the Netherlands." On December 10, 1968 the bishops said: "Through the publication of the statement concerning the New Catechism in the A. A. S. of November 30, the debate about the book has, after lengthy discussions, come to a close. The Dutch bishops would have preferred the commission of Cardinals to have agreed to the alterations that they themselves had proposed in October 1967. Once the corrections and amplifications which the commission of cardinals request are published, all those who are experts in the field will see that it remains possible to continue discussion on various points. Out of respect for the wishes of the Pope, the bishops have decided to refrain from discussing the matter further." From Rome, a new edition of 'Amplificatory Corrections' was sent to Holland on February 19, 1969. In the main, it repeats the version of the Fortmann Dhanis-Visser Commission, but shows clearer evidence of the hand of the two Roman theologians.

The authors of the New Catechism reacted to this with their a letter of March 1969 which they sent to the Dutch hierarchy: "The authors are of the opinion that these 'Amplifications of the New Catechism', written by Frs Dhanis and Visser, must, with even greater reason than the corrections suggested by the Dhanis Vissert Fortmann commission on 14 March, be rejected... Anyone who reads the revised text of Dhanis Visser in 'Amplifications' must be left with the impression that the authors and the bishops are in fact unorthodox. It seems to us simply wrong to present things in such an unnuanced way."

Finally, in the summer of 1969, there appeared, in a separate edition, the Supplement to the New Catechism (*Aanvullingen bij de Nieuwe Katechismus*) as composed by the theologians Dhanis and J. Visser, and sent from Rome to the Dutch bishops.

By way of conclusion

In the issue of October 15, 1968 of the well-known Review, *'Informations Catholiques Internationales'*, the editor G. Hourdin wrote: "There is a book that we all want to see written. A book that would give an exposé of the great truths of the Christian faith for the people of our time, for our children who doubt and who more and more abandon the practice of their faith, for our unbelieving friends who understand neither the all-too-obvious changes in, nor the very ancient mystery of, the Church. A book which we have not only dreamed of, but we find urgently necessary. It ought to be orthodox and Catholic. It ought to be true to the understanding of the faith as it is provided by the Christian Church which has its seat in Rome. It ought to allow us to get to know and to experience the texts of the Council which themselves are difficult to go into. That book exists. It was written in Holland. It has just appeared in French, after having been translated into German and English. Let us then rejoice."

From the story told above, it is clear that expressions of joy at the appearance of the New Catechism were neither altogether sincere nor general. In fact the discussions concerning the New Catechism were about something that is more basic than the book itself. What was, in the last analysis, at stake was the right of a pluriform theology to exist, and thus, also, of the multiform way in which the faith of the whole community and of the Magisterium can express itself. This problem will continue to exist in the world-Church, even after the debates about the New Catechism have died down. Unity in diversity,—achieving this goal is the difficult task which faces us, and it is one which we may not shirk. For if we do, we shall fail to build the House of the Father 'where there are many mansions.'

Louvain
Belgium

H. Gielen

BULLETIN: 2

Art India: Christian Paintings in Indian Style (Experience of a Publisher)

The need for adaptation of the Christian community to the Indian setting has been stressed again and again. This adaptation, it has been pointed out, requires that the community should live in vital contact with contemporary India. But past traditions also have their importance and their meaning. For many years now there has been a modest but persistent effort to do something concrete in the line of adaptation through the publication of pictures painted by artists in India. I refer here to *Art India*, Pune.

Publications of this kind in the service of adaptation have a number of advantages over other similar efforts. Pictures are relatively cheap; they can be brought into circulation in large quantities, and they reach a wider public. It is comparatively easy to experiment here, and to adapt oneself to new needs and new insights. The expenses involved in this venture during a period of nearly twenty years are not quite as great as those of a single large educational institution.

The Growth of 'Art India'

Art India started about twenty years ago in the room of a Jesuit student of theology: Fr Raymond Keel. He had a doctorate in jurisprudence before he entered the religious life. This was of help to him in overcoming obstacles created by Canon Law, ever watchful to prevent clerics from starting a business! Once when he feared that he might be forbidden to continue this work, I remember him saying indignantly, "All my printed pictures fit into one cupboard. In the modern context how can this be called a business?" Finally, however, he received full approval for the publication of his pictures. A priest had more chances of being listened to by Catholics than a lay person. At that time many

who could not see the meaningfulness of such a form of adaptation would take a priest's word on trust. Moreover, *Art India* has always been a service programme rather than a business enterprise. When Fr Keel suddenly died, a few years later his work did not come to an end. *Art India* has been publishing yearly from one to two dozen new pictures.

The publications covered mainly three fields: framable large religious pictures, small pictures, and Christmas cards. The best response was to the Christmas cards. At Christmas people would more easily accept Indian style representations than on other occasions. Some busy priests and sisters who clear their yearly debt of letters at Christmas prefer to have something Indian. In the beginning many of the cards were sent abroad. A well-known gentleman in Pune said, "For my acquaintances in India, I send foreign cards. For my friends abroad, I send Indian cards." At present most of the cards and nearly all the pictures, small and big, remain within the country.

The demand for large framable pictures is limited as normally only a few are required even for a large institution. Till recently few of our seminarians used pictures in Indian style. The normal preference was foreign pictures, as a rule the sweet and artistically poor ones. One should have seen the sad face of a Professor of Theology when one of his students, on the occasion of his ordination, offered him an ordination picture. The Professor said afterwards, "We have completely failed in training our young men in the appreciation of art." Partly because of a change of taste, and partly because of import difficulties, there is an increasing demand for *Art India*'s small pictures. Owing to the high cost of postage in recent times, inland forms and postcards have become popular.

Art India started by publishing pictures by Catholic artists: Angelo da Fanceca, Pune (1967); Angela Trindade, Bombay, at present in the U. S. A.; Sr Genevieve, Bangalore; Fr Vandekerckhove, Ranchi; Marie Pinto, Bombay; Sr V. Pereira, Bombay; Juliana Rodrigues, Pune; Sr Claire, Bangalore and Jyoti Sahi, now in Bangalore. This list includes a relatively large group of Sisters. They find, it seems, a more encouraging atmosphere for art than lay people do. All these artists are engaged full time in

activities other than painting. It is interesting to note that none of the Catholic artists here belongs to the convert generation.

Art India was soon able to publish works by artists from other Christian Churches also: among them are Lem Patole, and Joseph Ubale, Bombay, who died in the thirties. Through the co-operation of Mrs Naomi Wray, Jabalpur, this ecumenical dimension has been strengthened. This year *Art India* published prints from paintings by Frank Wesley, Mussoorie, Vinayak Masoiji, Nagpur, N. K. Misra, Lucknow, and Taba Jamyang, Massoorie. Others who may soon join the group of *Art India* artists are Marcus Topho, Bireswar Sen, Baldwin Norton and Shiavax Chavda. *Art India* has also published a picture by the Hindu Jamini Roy.

Our main concern is necessarily with contemporary Christian painting in India.¹ But we should not forget that there have been Christian paintings in previous periods of Indian history. We are comparatively well informed about Christian paintings

1. For contemporary Christian painting in India cf.: Anonymous, *Son of Man. Pictures and Carvings by Indian, African and Chinese Artists*, pp. 52, SPG, London, 1939. - Anonymous, *The Life of Christ. Twenty-four Paintings* by Alfred Thomas, pp. 58, SPG, London, 1948. - C. Constantini, *L'Art Chretien dans les Missions. Manuel d'art pour les Missionnaires*, pp. 439, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1949. - E. H. Slyter (ed.), *Christian Art in India*, The Commission on Christian Literature of the Methodist Church in Southern Asia, pp. 52, Lucknow, (about) 1960. The above books are available at the Papal Athenaeum Library, Pune. Cf. also A. Lehmann, *Die Kunst der ungen Kirchen*, Berlin, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1955. - A. Lehmann, *Asiatische christliche Kunst. Mit 282 Abbildungen*, pp. 285, Berlin, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1966. This last book is transl. by E. Hopka, J. E. Nopola and O. E. Sohn as *Christian Art in Africa and Asia*, Saint Louis Concordia Publishing House, 1966. The German edition of the last book is available at Art India, De Nobili College, Pune.

during the Mogul period. Felix zu Loewenstein² just before World War II judged that 60–100 such pictures were still available. They belonged to the period between the latter part of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. One can recognise in them a progress from careful and skilful imitation of good originals and engravings to an ever greater indigenisation, till finally one finds pictures in a completely Indian style. Some of them are of considerable beauty. *Art India* plans to republish some of the best of these pictures.

To these should be added whatever of value is available in the Syrian, South-Indian and Portuguese-Goan traditions.³ Much of the Portuguese-Goan art follows Western models; but in the statuary one can recognise the skill of the local artisan⁴.

'Art India' and Its Friends

The friends of *Art India* are mainly priests, religious and educated lay people. What are their tastes and preferences when they choose pictures? On the whole they prefer bright colours and glazed paper. Even offset prints are preferred if they are on glazed art paper rather than on the more dull but more artistic offset paper. There is a certain reluctance for prints on handmade paper, of which an extraordinary variety is available in the country. Many of these cards printed by the silk screen process are of a high quality.

The largest portion of religious pictures printed in India belongs to the so-called 'calendar-art' and the 'bazaar-art'. "No doubt," writes R. W. Taylor, "this (art) is a matter of taste. But the fact is, that it appears in most homes and in almost all temples and religious gathering places as well as in many offices

2. *Christliche Bilder in altindischer Malerei*, pp. 76, Muenster, Aschendorffsche Verlagshandlung, 1958.
3. *Art India*, De Nobili College, Pune 14, will be grateful for co-operation in tracing such works.
4. Nowadays old pieces of art are difficult to find for sale in India. Goa is still an exception to this. If the trend of giving away practically gratis old pieces of art to foreign visitors continues for a few more years then Goa will be much the poorer for the loss it suffers.

and cannot be ignored. They (the pictures) are gaudy but they are not unpleasant. I find that they have a certain charm."⁵ Still, the fact remains that they are often poor in artistic taste and religious expression. This background has to be kept in mind. In this respect Christians have a slight advantage over others as religious pictures normally used in their houses are of a slightly higher aesthetic quality.

The patrons of *Art India* are interested in art in general and in things Indian in particular. They are accustomed to read a symbolic meaning into a picture. They like to have rhythm in line, precision in form, and harmony in colour. They would agree with Gauguin that in painting as in music one must search rather for suggestion than for description. Not all would therefore ask that a picture must necessarily show ideal beauty, the perfect state, and satisfy the reason in quest of perfection. These are the ideals of a classical style.

A good number of those who are interested in Indian traditional forms of painting, are completely bewildered by modern forms of expression. They cannot easily become attuned to the searching and experimentation which characterize many modern forms of art. Such forms may reflect irrationality and chaos in life; they may also be symptoms of a struggle against materialism and depersonalization. Adaptation is required not only in relation to the traditional forms but even more to modern expressions.

Art India can only remain true to its purpose if it is a step ahead of the more commonly accepted tastes. It should not become a vanguard to such an extent that it isolates itself from the people it wishes to serve. Till very recently the pictures of even a relatively moderate artist like Angelo da Fonseca were published at a financial loss, for many found them too stern. "More colourful and pleasing pictures" by others had to make up for this loss. That the majority of the people do not identify themselves with the progressive vanguard is not typical

5. R. W. Taylor, 'Some Interpretations of Jesus in Indian Painting', in *Religion and Society*, Vol. XVIII, 3, Sept. 1970, pp. 105-6.

of India only. This can be seen from the selection of pictures published by similar art centres in the West.

Towards Christian Indian-Style Painting

It is the purpose of *Art India*, to promote Indian Christian art, to make available representations of Christian themes depicted in a way as felt and seen by an artist thoroughly at home in the Indian situation. No doubt, it always has been the privilege and challenge of art to express an idea through the medium of one's own culture: Twenty years ago it was still possible for an alarmed, though sympathetic, Mother Superior to write: "I regard the pictures you publish as somewhat devilish; still accept Rs 10 for your work." The principle that art does not merely aim at historically accurate representations but rather at clothing one's insights and experiences in forms and colours taken from one's own cultural background, is now widely accepted among our people. They agree that not depicting Christ as a Jew of his time does not mean denying his historicity; and that this adaptation is essential to artistic presentation. Angelo da Fonseca, a pioneer in Indian Christian art in modern times, explains the point thus: "Our Lady, they say, did never wear a *sari* and Christ was a jew. Why then should they be painted as Indians? The Christian faith has established a family relation between God and his creatures, that is, of Father and children and he gave us his mother for our own. If that is the case, they must resemble our own earthly fathers and mothers: hence the reason for depicting them as we do. Surely they were Jews but their love embraces all."⁶

N. G. Gorey, at that time Chairman of the Praja Samajwadi Paksha, speaking at a meeting after the death of Angelo da Fonseca said, "Hinduism has such a power of absorption that finally also other religions accept its external forms." The adaptation of Christian themes to Indian style flows from the need to live the universality of the Christian religion. Adaptation is a life expression of the Christian community. There can

6. A. da Fonseca, 'Indian Christian Art in Painting and Statuary, A Historical Retrospect', in *Indica*, The Indian Historical Research Institute, Bombay, 1953, p. 151

be misunderstandings but this does not take away the need for adaptation. Another difficulty in the effort to create Indian-style painting arises from recourse to classical styles of the past, for example, the style of mediaeval Hindu civilization (about 700-1200). This style belongs to a bygone age, and is not a vital force today. During the two World Wars a number of Christian artists were inspired by one or another of such traditional forms of painting. In the concrete setting this had its justification. A pendulum has to swing to the other side if its movement is to continue. It seems that the period of Indian Christian art when artists imitated the Ajanta, the Mogul or other similar styles is now over. It was left behind as the artists themselves grew, and developed progressively, a style of their own.

The most persistent argument against the indigenisation of Christian painting is the claim that a historical religion has to stress this historicity also in its religious paintings. Those who uphold it have not considered, perhaps, the difficulty it creates for them in appreciating much of the religious painting of all times and countries.

In many of our schools and parish institutions we still find the once popular Biblical pictures by Gebhard Fugel (1863-1939). These pictures are meant to show "how it was at that time." But are we primarily interested in "Christ as he was" or in "Christ as he is now", the Risen Christ who is always present? In no way should we diminish the importance of the Jesus of history. But even an attempt to paint him as historically as possible will include much imagination.

Herbert Schade speaks of the expression of an 'anonymous Christianity' in modern secularised paintings.⁷ These are far from being historically exact presentations. He enumerates several subjects in which a relation to Christ is seen. As a whole these paintings do not belong to the category of ecclesiastical art; not all of them are free from misrepresentation of the person and work of Christ. But this is not due to their failure to present

7. Herbert Schade, 'Zum "anonymen" Christentum der modernen Malerei' *Sinnen der Zeit*, Vol. 181, May 1968, pp. 303-18.

Christ historically. In these modern paintings Christ expresses the classless man and the lonely crowd, the victim of morality, the man of truth and of the great vision, the Master of the ruins, and Lord of the cosmos.

As Indian-style Christian painting develops, certain themes emerge as more appealing than others. Symbols which are unmistakably Christian (like the Cross), and those which are open to a variety of interpretations (like the lamp, the lotus, etc.) are preferred to those which are more directly connected with other religions (like O.M. etc.). As *Art India* prints at one time various designs in the same quantity it is easy to recognise the preferences of those who buy.

Art India pictures are bought not only for their artistic value. The buyer is also guided by cultic considerations. The picture is meant to nourish devotion. Angelo da Fonseca wrote, "We artists must make an effort to create real devotional pictures, and not merely to put a halo behind the head of a beautiful woman or inscribe a label at the foot of an ordinary man. Let, therefore, devotion be the substratum of inspiration, and that fostered by the breezes that descend from the lofty Himalayas."⁸ Devotional pictures are more favoured than, for example, mere illustrative presentations of Gospel scenes. Favoured subjects are the Sacred Heart, the Cross, Christ the Lord, the Master, the Guru; Mary and the Child Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, etc.

Some appreciate a picture because it represents a sacred theme, irrespective of the aesthetic value of the presentation. As *Art India* is not on the level of bazaar art, it addresses those who have a maturer understanding. To educate people to appreciate artistic pictures is a slow process. But this is one of the aims and tasks of *Art India*.

Few have an interest in purchasing original paintings. This is partly due to their cost, though this is not the only reason. A good original can be bought for Rs 150 to Rs 250. Only if originals sell, can artists live by their art. A. da Fonseca was

8. A. da Fonseca, *Ibid.*, p. 152.

once asked to paint pictures for an institution. He prepared some sketches and – only at the instance of some of his friends – he stated the price: Rs 250 for the full picture and Rs 25 for sketches which will not be used. Back came the answer, "We take the sketches!" One of the students of the Institution projected the sketches on the wall and painted the pictures himself. In this way the Institution saved some money! This brings us to the question of the artist, to whose assistance *Art India* wishes to rally.

Artists need Patrons

It requires courage in our country to become an artist who lives by his art. Some of the *Art India* artists have family property; some do professional work in one line or other. Those who wish to live by their art are in for a hard time till they can establish themselves. When A. da Fonseca left Shantiniketan his Master Abanindra Nath Tagor told him to go out and to paint churches. It was only in the year of his death that finally a request of the type was made to him, which would have given him opportunities to fulfil this mission.

One cannot determine beforehand what shape Indian Christian art will take. We need many artists who dedicate themselves to its service. Hermann Goetz writes, "We are entitled to claim a unity of Indian tradition, different from that of other high civilizations. But we have likewise to acknowledge a diversity which makes it utterly impossible to bring all aspects of Indian art to one denominator. The "Ideals of Indian Art" proclaimed by pioneer scholars,... are those of mediaeval Hindu art, and to some extent of the Buddhist art preceding it, elaborating a certain amount of even older concepts, but certainly not applicable to later times. An honest picture of Indian art has to keep in mind the different character of the successive phases of Indian civilisation which produced that art."⁹ This implies that the understanding of Indian art must be very broad. There must

9. Hermann Goetz, *India, Five Thousand Years of Indian Art*, Holle and Co. Baden-Baden, 1959, p. 14.

be place for the magnificent Muslim contribution, the Buddhist imagery under Hellenist influence and also for the wood statues of Goan artisans.

Only artists who are in vital contact with Indian life and its traditions can produce something truly Indian. They need also a Christian insight in order to express their faith genuinely. The Christian sense of the people will eliminate what is lacking in Christian depth. Such insufficient representations are, for example, Christ as a mere Sadhu, Christ as a Yogi who reaches enlightenment through effort and exertion; the suffering, distorted Christ without the hope that lies beyond death.

Angelo da Fonseca painted one of the best Indian Christs in 1967, a few months before his death: a portrait, clear, manly in its lines and discerning in the choice of colours. The brown face with steady eyes looking out, and the smooth lines of the long hair and beard show nobility, depth, sanctity and affection. The head is surrounded by a red halo standing out from a violet background. A plain, yellowish kurta enhances the simplicity and majesty of the whole figure. The picture impresses itself as a genuine expression of the Christian faith; it does not reveal everything of Christ, but what it says is true and at the same time also fully Indian. One could expect this Christ to rebuke the winds and to tell the sea, "Be calm." His mouth could utter the words, "I am the Way, the Life, the Truth." In this picture the artist has found his style: the influences of his native Goa subsumed in his personal style, in a painting which is a testimony of his own manly faith.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion we wish to stress the following:

1. Today Christian paintings in Indian style have come to stay. It is now our task to encourage and promote what is already growing. Some paintings of this period are of high quality. On the whole the atmosphere is sympathetic to such efforts.

2. As priests and religious have special opportunities for the promotion of art, there should be provision for training in art-appreciation in our seminaries and religious houses of formation. The same holds good for educational institutions and lay organisations.

3. Artists always depend on patronage. Let us encourage promising artists and above all let us give them such royalties as make it possible for them to live by their art.

"Snehasadan",
Pune 30, India.

Mathew R. Lederle, S. J.

LONG RETREAT FOR PRIESTS

Date: From October 10th to November 10th.

Venue: Christ Hall, Malaparamba, Calicut-9. Christ Hall is the Jesuit Novitiate. It is our hope that the facilities and the atmosphere of Christ Hall will be conducive to making a good Retreat.

Preacher: The Retreat will be directed by C. G. Valles, a Spanish Jesuit who is very much sought after for giving talks and conferences.

Expenses will be divided equally among the Retreatants.

Fr J. Mekat, S. J.,
Provincial

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